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# LEGEND AND ROMANCE

BY MARIANNE G. LE MOTTÉE

DIGBY, LONG & CO., LONDON

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The name of the author is foreign - French probably; and the writer's sex is feminine - The novel deals with scenes in Guernsey and in France.

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# LEGEND AND ROMANCE

*A NOVEL*

BY

M. G. LE MOTTÉE

A NEW EDITION

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# LEGEND AND ROMANCE.

## CHAPTER I.

"TO be, or not to be, that is the question!" exclaimed a young girl of nineteen as she watched the receding form of a young man, as he slowly walked away down the lawn of the Old Manor House, and through the green lanes leading back into the town.

This young lady, by name Marie de Maistre, was the spoiled child and heiress of the Lord of the Manor of Fontaine, in the island of Guernsey, one of a group known as the Channel Isles, which passed into the possession of the English Crown

at the Conquest with the Duchy of Normandy, retaining ever since its own Norman laws and Parliament, with a Lieutenant-Governor, and a couple of regiments of regulars to support his dignity (he being the representative in the island of Her Most Gracious Majesty Victoria, Queen of England, Empress of India, and *Duchess of Normandy*).

Great was the excitement, and many the hopes and expectations among the "Guernsey Lilies" (as they have appropriately been named), at the annual arrival of these gallant sons of Mars, for much, if not all island gaiety depends on their society, the sons of the soil being scattered abroad, mostly in the army, returning only for the long leave of three months in the winter, or absent for an indefinite period, coffee planting in the Colonies. On the other

hand, the island folk never fail in making an agreeable impression, and every year the fairest "Lilies" are plucked and carried off.

Captain Pierrepoint, the young man alluded to, was one of the new arrivals in a gallant regiment quartered in the island, lately returned from foreign service, where it had reaped many honours and distinctions. He was not a man to fall easily in love; indeed, he had been heard to say, that he had only been guilty of sending a bouquet to a lady *once* in his life, and that a Covent Garden one, from which it was inferred he would never again commit such an indiscretion, much as he admired the fair sex, of whom, by the way, he was a very good judge, with regard to both beauty and dress. He was the factotum in the regiment, being a good manager, cheerful and sprightly, and always ready to set things going. There

had already been many balls and tennis parties, where at one of the former he had been introduced to Miss de Maistre as a *débutante* and acknowledged *Iland Belle!* In fact, it was the correct thing to know her, for, independently of her looks and fortune, the Old Manor House was famed for its hospitality and good cheer. They had now known one another for some three or four months. It was decidedly a flirtation, or, as the island gossips put it, "Captain Pierrepoint was fast yielding to the fascinations of Marie de Maistre." And in what consisted these fascinations? Youth, a tall supple figure, good teeth, a fine head of light brown hair, grey eyes (her *rivals* called them *green*), and a charm of manner all her own, the true Norman type, rarely equalled, and seldom surpassed.

As she stood at the window of the Old

Manor House, this glorious June evening, she was indeed a pretty picture, and so thought Captain Pierrepoint, as he turned round once and again to wave a farewell. Flushed with health and happiness, the winner of two out of the three games of tennis, and thereby of the reward agreed upon, viz., two dozen pairs of the best Brussels kid gloves, but, above all, with the consciousness that she possessed this man's *heart*, *this* was indeed a triumph, and one which quickened her pulse, and made her heart beat high, for this was the first time the young girl had felt the approach of love, and had become aware of the dangerous power of Beauty, which had suddenly transformed the timid child into a lovely woman, and no ordinary one either. For hers was a deep and powerful nature, with many subtle intricacies, hardly known to herself, and

much less to those around her, who loved to spoil the high-spirited girl, and lavish all their favours on her. Old Mr. de Maistre's one happiness was to see her happy, and her mother was equally doting and less judicious, petting and spoiling her one moment, and thinking it her duty to severely chide her short-comings the next, though, like her husband, secretly idolising her only child, leaving for the most part the chiding and punishments to her old governess, Miss Mercer, who had been specially selected for her training and admonishment. So faithfully had she discharged the duties of her calling, that she had inspired the girl with an amount of awe which lasted to the end of her natural life.

This worthy woman was no longer required as governess, masters having succeeded her for the finishing touches of

Marie's education, so she had for some time past been comfortably provided for; but she still kept a discreet eye over her former charge's doings, the parents confidently hoping 'twould be an effectual check to too ardent admirers, who knew of her existence, and the wonderful way in which she became possessed of all the current news of the Manor House, and the gossip of the island in general. This worthy woman, among her other virtues, was imbued with a deep hatred of Popery, and her chief care had been to instil into Marie's mind the horrors of the Papacy, and all the blessings of Protestantism, to all of which the girl lent a willing ear, for was she not the descendant of a proud old Huguenot family who had sacrificed all for faith and freedom? Her father, however, was a High Churchman, and many were the battles he waged

with this good lady, who never quite forgave him for upholding Purgatory and other Popish doctrines ; but as she was allowed to freely instil her Low Church notions into Marie, she made the best of the situation, by atoning for the father's religious delinquencies in a carefully narrow training of the daughter.

## CHAPTER II.

THE first chapter has been a long digression from the opening words of my story, and the sudden exclamation of Marie de Maistre as she watched the receding form of her lover on that lovely June evening.

"Ah! there is not anything to be compared to old Shakespeare! After the Bible, it is the wisest book ever written: he has always a suitable quotation for all sorts and conditions of men! Yes, after the Bible, I adore Shakespeare!"

This exclamation, the outcome of many conflicting feelings, aroused by the admiration and devotion she was evidently inspiring

in the gallant Pierrepoint, was rudely interrupted by the dinner-gong, which warned her it was time to smooth her hair, and prepare for the dinner-table, and for a considerable amount of cross-questioning as to her doings during the afternoon.

The mysteries of tennis were fully explained in answer to countless inquiries from her father, who displayed a profound ignorance of this fashionable pastime, highly commendable in a Jurat of the Royal Court, but decidedly trying to Marie's enthusiasm for a game so dear to the hearts of English men and women of the present day. Her mother's probings were more to the point, and before long elicited the fact that she had won a couple of dozen pair of gloves from Captain Pierrepoint, which she declared she had every intention of accepting.

"Well, really, Marie!" said her mother,

"you are too bad. You cannot have a conscience! I shall not allow you to accept more than a couple of pairs, and shall tell Captain Pierrepoint so. I suppose if he had put it at *six dozen*, you would not have thought it at all extravagant?"

"Well, as it so happens," said the girl, "he *did* say six, or any other amount, so I thought *two dozen* a very reasonable quantity, under the circumstances, and consider I have fairly won my bet."

"Well, well," said her father, who wished to put an end to the discussion, "this is all very well *once* in a way, but remember, Marie, I will have no more mad wagers of the kind. You are such a madcap, there is no knowing what follies you will commit. You must recollect you are no longer the child, and are now expected to act discreetly and soberly, as becomes

a respectable member of society;" with which words of wisdom Mr. de Maistre proceeded to light his cigar and sip his coffee, in which pleasant occupation he soon became oblivious to all around him, and finally sank into a gentle doze, in which his wife kept him company.

This was the signal for Marie to beat a hasty retreat, and with a skip and a bound, she disappeared through the open French window on to the lawn, followed by her dogs, who had been impatiently awaiting her arrival for their usual scamper; for dearly they loved to romp with their young mistress, who was equally devoted to her canine friends; for Cesar the bloodhound, and Rover the retriever, were her faithful and constant companions, and many were the scrapes into which she had fallen with the village folk on their account, such as

the carrying off of a plump fowl, or still worse, at the chasing and worrying of a pet cat.

"Come, Cesar! come, Rover!" she cried, as she led them off in a wild run down the lawn, and on to the sea-shore, half a mile distant from the house, where, tired with her exertions, she flung herself down on the beach, with the panting dogs on each side of her, while she watched the incoming tide, and wondered vaguely what the future had in store for *her*, now launched on the ocean of life.

Whether, like the little fisherboat before her, her bark would calmly ride on the ocean's breast safe in the harbour of refuge; or whether it would be caught in many a storm, and, powerless to stem the rising flood, the waves would go over it, and engulf it for ever in the great ocean of

Eternity? It was one of those strange moments which come to *all*, and from which *none*, even in the happiest hours of life, are exempt—an indefinable *dread*, the shadow of the *unknown* casting its gloom over the soul.

The feeling, however, was but transitory; so, hastily jumping up with a shiver—for the waves had now nearly reached the spot where she was sitting, and were casting their spray high over her, and the evening dew was falling fast—she called her dogs, and retracing her homeward steps, received a chiding from her good mother for sitting out so long.

Meanwhile, the following conversation was taking place between Captain Pierrepoint and one of his brother officers, Mr. Lee, this same evening, as they sat smoking their cigarettes after mess, on a terrace over-

looking Belvedere Bay, and embracing a magnificent view (one of the finest in Guernsey) of Herm and Jethon, Sark, Jersey, Alderney, and the coast of France in the far distance.

"Well, Pierrepoint, how are you getting on with the fair De Maistre, and how many pairs of gloves did you win this afternoon?"

"Oh! I lost the bet; the little girl beat me all to smithereens. But I say, Lee, I have a message for you from the heiress, to hold yourself in readiness for a picnic to Pleinmont Point on the first of July. Her pretty cousin, Hélène Le Gros, will be of the party."

"Then, by Jove! I shall make one of the party!" said Lee. "The two cousins are as charming a pair as one can set eyes on, and very like one another too! Bedad! I

was very nearly whispering 'sweet nothings' in the ear of *your charmer*, instead of mine, at Mrs. Lucy's ball the other night, but Garry! she soon brought me to, and then I discovered my mistake. They do not resemble one another in character, at any rate. None of your tragedy queens for *me*. Give me the fair Hélène, with her soft face and clinging ways, something one can mould easily; and if there is only a little money, by the Powers above! that is the girl for me."

Captain Pierrepoint laughed heartily at the Irishman's speech, and fervently echoing his wish for a prosperous *dénouement* of their love affairs, they separated, to ponder over separately, and from a different point of view, the all-absorbing picnic. Captain Pierrepoint, like the practical man he was, to study the pros and cons for the

champagne cup which he had undertaken to supply on the occasion, and Mr. Lee, to compose one hundred and one pretty speeches, which he was already rehearsing in happy anticipation of his approaching meeting with the fair Hélène in so romantic a spot as Pleinmont Point, which he foresaw would determine his fate, the present uncertainty of which was most trying to one of his excitable temperament; for, as we have seen, he had evidently "gone the pace" in his courting of Marie de Maistre's pretty cousin, much to the amusement of Captain Pierrepoint and his other brother officers, though not to their satisfaction, who, one and all, thought the charming little Hélène Le Gros much too dainty a morsel for the bragging Irishman, and enjoyed putting a spoke in his wheel at every available opportunity. This misery, Mr. Lee had determined, could

be borne no longer, and though knowing himself to be far from an "eligible," made up his mind to try his luck, and "rushing in where angels fear to tread," carry all before him, on the well-worn, and too often successful principle, "*Faint heart* never won *fair lady.*"

## CHAPTER III.

"I'll be hanged if I'll do gooseberry to you two girls!" exclaimed Bob Le Gros to his sister Hélène, as she imparted to him their cousin Marie's decision for a picnic.

The speaker was a tall fair boy of nineteen, just returned from a public school for the Midsummer vacation, and was at the present moment engaged in the pleasing occupation of discussing a large plateful of strawberries and cream, to which he was very partial, judging from the rapid way they were disappearing down that insatiable cavity, a schoolboy's throat.

"I'll be hanged if I'll do gooseberry!"

"Which means that you will," laughed Hélène; "for do not two negatives make an affirmative? at least old Lennie has made it a rule without any exception, if I remember right: so come, Bob, be a good boy, and promise uncle and aunt you will undertake to look after us."

"And whom am I to understand by 'us,' if you please?" said Bob with a groan, in anticipation of his onerous duties.

"Oh, Marie and myself, and——"

"And the remainder," said Bob, "is not hard to guess—Captain Pierrepoint and Mr. Lee, I'll be bound! A host in themselves, no doubt."

"And," added Hélène, "uncle and aunt, and last, but not least, the dogs."

"And what have you done with Miss Mercer? Is she quite out of your reckoning?"

"Oh, she won't like the heat."

"That is just what she *would* like, as it so happens; so mind you make room for the old girl. I'll sit with her in the rumble, and make love to her into the bargain! Bless her heart! I am always a favourite of hers!"

"Yes, she admires your superior wisdom; no doubt yours is the proverbial 'old head on young shoulders,' and she is never so happy as when she is pouring into your ears long histories of mine and Marie's shortcomings, delighted with the prospect that we shall undergo a lecture second-hand from you, including your own happy remarks thereon, making a double weight of wisdom, and pretty heavy to bear in consequence."

"Well! a very good thing too, if it has the effect of steadying that light head of yours! But I say, Hélène, how is it be-

tween Marie and Captain Pierrepoint? Do you think it is anything serious?"

"Oh, Marie is such a funny girl, you know, and so difficult to understand; she *seems* to like Captain Pierrepoint's attentions, and he is her first *grown-up* admirer; but the way she flirts with Tom Connelly is dreadful, and yet I don't believe she is one whit more in love with him! I can't understand Marie!"

"Then I can," said Bob, flinging himself on a sofa to digest the strawberries and cream, and observe the effect his remarks would have on his sister. "*I understand* her! She is *ambitious*; she will have neither the one nor the other!"

There was silence for a moment or two, for this was quite a revelation to Hélène. Herself of a gentle, yielding disposition, she could not comprehend any girl *de*

*liberately* throwing aside love for ambition; but this seemed to throw a light on many of Marie's "incomprehensibilities," as she called it. It came quite as a shock to the gentle girl, as she thought how unhappily it might all end, if Marie played fast and loose with Captain Pierrepoint, perhaps loving him in heart, but scorning him for ambition's sake; also, she was deeply attached to her. They had been brought up together as sisters, and Hélène clung to the proud, self-reliant girl as the ivy clings to the rock.

"Oh! I hope it is not as you think, Bob. She and Captain Pierrepoint seem so suitable to one another. He is a man of good family, and though not a Crœsus, is very comfortably off, and on the whole I think Marie would be lucky to get him; at any rate I hope she won't throw away a good man's love."

"Oh! you are one of those 'marry, and live happy ever after' sort of young women, and I suppose that will be your fate, my dear sister; but I can tell you, there is none of that in Marie; she looks too far ahead. 'Love in a cottage' is not *her* idea of matrimonial bliss. At any rate, love or no love, she is too ambitious to take a fellow for 'better or for worse' unless he can give her a good rise in the social scale. Pierrepoint is all very well in his way, but he is not what she wants; he is only burning his wings like the proverbial moth, and I am only wasting time doing 'gooseberry.'"

"Oh! all-wise Bob!" laughed Hélène, "then pray bestow your attentions on me only, and I'll promise not to waste your precious time, and will stand by you in your weak moment, whenever that comes about. You will not be able to do without a 'goose-

berry.' Bob, a sister is an invaluable go-between, and I shall take good care of your interests, and see that the lady is a desirable *partie*, before I allow the only brother with which Providence has endowed me to fall a victim." And with a merry laugh she rushed from the room to escape the inevitable teasing which would have been the result of her rash speech, arousing all Bob's schoolboy propensities for love of a romp, and the plaguing of a girl. As it was, Miss Mercer received the whole force of the collision, for the good lady, hearing a hubbub in the dining-room, had bent her steps thither to inquire the cause, and pour oil on the troubled waters; instead of which (like many other would-be peacemakers, who get the tables turned on themselves) she came into violent collision with stalwart Bob, who was rushing from the room in wild pursuit

of his sister, and they both went tottering together against a friendly wall, which alone preserved their equilibrium.

"Ah, Miss Mercer. Talk of an angel," said Bob, as he laughingly surveyed the good lady's agitated face and crumpled cap, underneath which the corkscrew curls were still dancing up and down from the violence of the shock, and her fat little body quivering all over like a disturbed jelly.

"Talk of an angel, indeed!" exclaimed the irate old lady; "talk of a great gawk of a schoolboy more like! Why, Mr. Bob, you will be the death of me."

"Well, as it is a clear case of which was the hardest, I can return your compliment; so let us be friends, for accidents *will* happen."

"And what was all that noise about, pray?"

"Oh, we were discussing a picnic to take place on the first of July, quite *en famille*, in which you and I have been arranged to figure conspicuously in looking after the girls, worse luck to it! So hold yourself in readiness. Good-bye and *au revoir*."

## CHAPTER IV.

THE first of July dawned as propitiously as mortals could desire who had set their hearts on an outing in the country, and a champagne lunch. Bob was mighty in his preparations for catching the wily shrimp in Rockaine Bay, it being a good shrimping tide, and the female portion of the community had been deep in the packing of hampers containing such truculent dainties as pigeon pies, raspberry tarts, fruit and cream, etc., for at least an hour before starting. Precisely at 10 a.m. Captain Pierrepoint and Mr. Lee drove up to the Manor House in their dogcart, and away the whole party started for Pleinmont

Point, followed by the Manor House dogs, whose bark, always noisy, was louder than ever to-day amid the general hilarity; for they appeared to know and appreciate the fact that they were starting off on a good day's lark. Away they whirled through the sweet Guernsey lanes, passing many a pretty old church and village, the air redolent with the smell of hay, cows, flowers and ripe fruit, the *tout ensemble* making up that "country smell" which puts new life and vigour into all who breathe it. When at last, after a good two hours' drive, the quaint steeple of Torteval Church loomed in the distance, and beyond it the Hanois lighthouse shimmered white in the glare of the noon-day sun, our party hailed with satisfaction the fresh sea air, and the speedy prospect of lunch, the necessary preliminary of the day's programme. For who can go without eating?

Alike in joy and in sorrow the inward fires must be replenished, and notwithstanding our spiritual flights and longings to get above this hateful body, it ever reminds us we are of the earth, earthy, so that the best part of our lives is absorbed in the questions, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" I need hardly state, however, that such reflections in no wise troubled any member of our party, as the carriages dashed down the last steep hill, and turned sharply round a corner into Mrs. Sarre's farmyard, where that good lady was waiting to receive them with a beaming face of welcome, coupled with many a complimentary speech on the blooming appearance of the family in general since the last picnic excursions of the summer before.

When all compliments had been ex-

changed, and the general shaking of hands was over, the party trooped into the farm-house, to pay a visit to the old "granddame" in her hundredth year. There they found her seated erect on the "green bed" in the best kitchen, knitting a "guernsey" with a speed and precision which must be seen to be believed in. She greeted the party respectfully, never once stopping in her knitting, as she coolly surveyed them, in her turn submitting to be stared at as a matter of course. Her brown, weather-beaten face, furrowed deep with countless wrinkles, her erect figure, her silence—for she rarely spoke—and her rapid mechanical knitting, made her look more like an automaton than a reality, and it was difficult to conceive death would ever claim her for his own, but rather that she would live on thus, until the consummation of the age.

Many were the exclamations of surprise and wonder at this long-lived dame, a fine specimen of a good old Guernesiase.

A racy smell of fried eggs and bacon now led them off to another kitchen, where lunch was spread. And what a spread! Oh ye gods! I see it before me now, and smell it too! A huge dish of fried eggs and bacon, pigeon pie, ham, fruit tarts, curds and clotted cream, with strawberries and raspberries *ad lib.*, the whole washed down with iced champagne! What more could mortal man desire? The spotless cloth was only surpassed by the nicely sanded floor, which made one long to eat off it, so deliciously white and sweet did it look. Our friend Bob was in high good humour over the liberal cheer. Mr. and Mrs. de Maistre did it ample justice, so also Miss Mercer, who, according to Bob, became quite frolic-

some after the champagne, and made desperate love to him. Even our lovers found an appetite for the good things before them, and Bob, with many a nudge and wink at his cousin Marie, at Mr. Lee's expense, whispered her that there was not anything to equal an Irishman's digestion, not even his brogue, save the mark! After lunch they all sauntered out on the cliffs to agree upon a rendezvous for tea. This it was unanimously decided should be at Victor Hugo's "Haunted House," made famous in his "*Travailleurs de la Mer*" as the abode of smugglers, who secreted their contraband goods in the caves underneath at the foot of these cliffs, and near which few ever venture. Even the gulls and cormorants, as they swoop down on the angry breakers in search of their prey, then rise with shrill cries, and soar swiftly away, seem to avoid as strange

and uncanny these dark mysterious caverns, into which the light of day never penetrates. Far away on the horizon, the Douvres Rocks are just visible on a very clear day. Strangers bestow much craning of neck and trying of eyesight in order to convince themselves they have actually seen these famous rocks, made fearful by Victor Hugo to all succeeding generations, as the haunt of the "octopus" or "pieuvre," and the scene of its fearful struggle with the hero of his romance.

Oh! Immortal poet! Titanic mind! sympathiser with the poor! lover of children! hater of tyrants! your crumbling dust has been laid by a mighty people in their vast Pantheon, but your soul has soared from its prison house into Realms of Light; and if it takes count of this sordid planet, can it be unmindful of the "noble little nation of

the sea," * where so long it struggled for liberty, and groped through the gloom to the light, from thence scattering abroad those sparks which have illuminated the whole world, and made immortal the name of Victor Hugo ?

* See Victor Hugo's dedication in "Toilers of the Sea."

## CHAPTER V.

THE party now separated for the afternoon, Bob in full shrimping costume, ready for his sport, after which he waded up to his waist, while the elder members of the family contented themselves by paddling about in the large ponds left by the receding tide, and where they declared the finest prawns were to be found in hiding under the huge stones. The girls and the young men set off on an exploring excursion over the cliffs. Marie was in the highest of spirits, and caused Captain Pierrepoint some anxious moments as she bounded over the rocky cliffs with the lightness and agility of a fawn; for she was a splendid climber, and in that, as in all manly

exercise, an adept. Captain Pierrepoint thought he had never seen such a lithe, supple figure, as she bounded along just in front of him. Suddenly he heard a sharp cry of pain, and before he could reach the spot and stretch out a helping hand, she had fallen over a wall of large stones piled loosely one on top of the other, and in falling her gown had detached one, dragging it down on top of her foot, causing excruciating pain, making her feel quite faint, and for the moment unable to move.

"Are you very much hurt?" asked Captain Pierrepoint, as he rushed up to her assistance and bent tenderly over her.

"Oh no! It is not anything; it will soon pass off; but I fear I shall not be able to climb any more, and the prospect of spending the rest of the day in this hollow is not agreeable."

"Well! you must rest here awhile, then take my arm, and we will try and get a little further up the cliff, where we shall get the breeze, and enjoy a good view. Things might have been worse, so we must feel thankful for small mercies. Do you feel better now?"

"Yes. I think I could manage to hobble very slowly a little higher up, with your help."

In another instant Marie found herself arm-in-arm with a gallant soldier, a situation she would have given worlds to have avoided. There was no help for it, however, so passing her hand lightly through the proffered arm, she attempted to walk. Easier said than done, however, for the foot, which had swollen up enormously, caused her the greatest pain, and she was obliged to lean her whole weight on the proffered arm,

even then making but slow and painful progress.

"What a nuisance I am!" she exclaimed impatiently. "I do hope I am not a very great burden!"

"Ah!" said he, "if this were the only burden I had to bear in life I should be lucky!" And he added in a soft whisper, "If you would let me bear it always!"

"Oh! you would repent of it, believe me!"

"Oh no! Strange that, after all my knocking about the world and society, Guernsey should contain my jewel, and so verify, yet again, the old adage, that the 'best gems are to be found in little caskets.'"

"And yet you are always offending me, remarking how small the island is, and that you never can go half a mile without seeing the sea, my beloved sea!"

"Oh! if you lived in woodland scenery

you would like it much better, and I am sure you would like New Zealand; it is a splendid climate, and if you were to see the breakers rolling on to the shore *there*, you would never think any more of your Guernsey channel! Many of our fellows settled out there on leaving the regiment, and they have no wish to return, comfortably settled down on their farms, making their money."

"Oh! I should never be happy out of Guernsey," she exclaimed; "and I never *could* think of New Zealand—that would be too dreadful. I don't want to be made mince-meat of by the Maoris!"

There was silence for a few moments. No sound disturbed the summer stillness, save the ceaseless murmur of the ocean, and the cry of the sea-gulls. The air aromatic with camomile caused a dreamy sensation, and it seemed to these two as if they could

almost hear the beating of each other's heart as they sat thus, holding each the other's fate in their hands. Marie at last broke the awkward pause by saying, "Ah! that was a dreadful war with the Maoris. Tell me something about it."

"Well! there is not much to relate. We lost nearly all our officers, for the men were young and raw recruits, and lost all *morale* when brought face to face with savage warfare, and it was impossible to rally them. The Maoris picked off our poor officers. Do you know, I always had a presentiment I should be killed in battle."

"Well! as you are sitting here safe and sound, your presentiment was not fulfilled. You must wait for another occasion," she said with a laugh.

Ah! how often she thought of that conversation afterwards, for many a true word

is uttered in jest! If we could lift the veil and gaze into the future how differently we should all act in the present; but an All-wise Providence sees fit to hide it from view. We are left to work out our own salvation, oftentimes in darkness and perplexity, for to each and all comes the fierce trial, to purify the soul as with fire, and free it from all earthly dross.

Seeing that the girl was not in a serious humour Captain Pierrepoint thought it better to press his suit no further that day; he therefore merely asked her to accept a bouquet of roses and cut flowers he had ordered for her for the ball his regiment was giving the following week, and to which she had looked forward with great delight. This she said would give her much pleasure, if well enough to attend the ball, which at present did not look much like it.

"Well! even if you cannot dance, you must come and look on."

"And watch you dance with *other people*? How cruel of you to put me to such torture!" said the little flirt, for she knew well enough that a couple of duty dances would be all he would get through with any one save herself.

At this moment a loud hulloaing was heard, and suddenly Bob loomed in sight.

"What the dickens are you about that you don't come to tea? I am as hungry as a lion, and we are waiting for you two, and Hélène and Mr. Lee."

Marie's mishap was related, and with the combined help of Bob and Captain Pierrepoint she was speedily carried back to the bosom of the family, who were not a little alarmed at the accident.

## CHAPTER VI.

MEANWHILE Hélène and Mr. Lee had passed the afternoon very agreeably and satisfactorily from a lover's point of view. They had wandered down to the beach, and coming across an old fisherman who was about to set sail on a short fishing excursion in the bay, Mr. Lee, with many gesticulations, aided by Hélène's knowledge of the *patois*, made the old man understand that they wished to accompany him. To this he readily assented, and they were soon well out of the bay, when the old fisherman dropped anchor near some rocks and prepared for an hour or two's fishing. He was soon busy baiting his hook to settle

down to his work, and too intent on the capture of rock-fish to trouble himself about the happy pair he had brought out with him, and not understanding a word of English, he never made any attempt to listen to their conversation, and soon became quite oblivious of their presence. There was only a slight ripple on the water as the boat rocked gently up and down with the now fast incoming tide. The sail had been taken down, and they intended to row back, both Mr. Lee and Hélène being good oars. As yet Mr. Lee had not taken any advantage of this golden opportunity to pop the question, though he had kept turning over in his mind how best to approach the burning subject, which somehow or other appeared always just to elude his grasp; and he was beginning to think he would have to return with the riddle unsolved, when the Fates came to his

aid in a most unexpected and opportune manner, though at the cost of an adventure which might have been fraught with serious consequences, which ended fortunately with a good fright only. Hélène was leaning over the side of the boat, with a hand in the water, talking the while in a dreamy, listless manner to Mr. Lee, when suddenly she saw advancing rapidly towards her in the clear blue water several long spiral feelers of about half the thickness of a man's wrist, from the centre of which protruded a large head, with two enormous round eyes. In one moment she recognised the dreaded *pieuvre*, or octopus, which is common enough among the rocks of this coast, and sufficiently large and powerful to hang on to an arm or leg, and drag its victim under water if timely assistance is not at hand. As is often the case in a sudden shock, Hélène felt too com-

pletely paralysed to utter a sound or withdraw her hand from the water, and in another instant the cuttle-fish had darted out one of its long feelers with lightning-like rapidity and fastened itself on to the tempting bait. Then a piercing shriek rang on the still air, and Mr. Lee, who had rushed to her side, was almost as horror-stricken as herself to behold for the first time in his life this truly devilish-looking cuttle-fish, with one of its horrible arms wound firmly round Hélène's unprotected hand. A fearful cry escaped him, and, seizing his pocket knife, he made several deep gashes at it. All to no purpose, however; the horrid cuttle-fish hung on tenaciously, and it is difficult to say how it would have ended had not the old fisherman at last been aroused by the scuffle, and seeing in a moment how matters stood, seized his hatchet, and with one good stroke

severed the creature's arm at the head. It sank instantly, leaving a long trail of inky substance behind it, darkening the water, and so disappearing from sight. And now poor Hélène commenced sobbing piteously, the natural consequence and reaction of such a terrible fright. She still clung to Mr. Lee's arm, which she had wildly seized when he came to her assistance, and she was still too unnerved to relinquish her hold of it; and, indeed, she had no wish to do so, for she felt sorely in need of comfort and consolation; and there is no denying that, under such trying circumstances, the support of a manly arm was not to be despised; and if in an unguarded moment she revealed rather too clearly the state of her feelings with regard to him, it would be difficult for the veriest prude to find fault, and Mr. Lee certainly did not. Inwardly and fervently blessing the

gods for thus smoothing his way, he set about pouring oil and balm on the troubled waters, with an *empressement* which, on the other hand, conveyed to Hélène the fact that their flirtation had taken a most serious turn. She sobbed more piteously than ever, as it suddenly occurred to her she had placed herself in a most compromising, not to say ludicrous, position. These adverse reflections were, however, soon cut short, for, as we already know, the octopus had but brought matters to a crisis so far as Mr. Lee was concerned; and in another moment he had taken her in his arms, vowing he would be her protector through life if she would only let him. To this she made no reply; and as silence gives consent, Mr. Lee sealed his proposal with many passionate kisses. Upon this Hélène feebly remonstrated, whispering faintly many scarcely

audible speeches about braving her uncle's displeasure, she having grave doubts as to his approval of their engagement. To this Mr. Lee remarked that, after fighting an octopus, he felt equal to any emergency, even to the braving of her uncle's wrath ; but they must belong to one another now at any cost! This seemed to reassure and console Hélène, who began to look more like herself again ; and they both laughed heartily as they now watched the old fisherman muttering to himself, and preparing with all haste to return to shore ; for their unbidden and unwelcome guest had aroused in him all sorts of wild and superstitious fancies ; for fishermen look upon the octopus as the very incarnation of all evil ; and as he kept glancing furtively at them, he was evidently associating them in some way or other with the untoward event ; and Mr. Lee's passion-

ate love-making did not tend to reassure him —a judgment on him, doubtless, for harbouring a runaway pair, as he evidently appeared to think them! It was therefore with intense relief that Mr. Lee and Hélène applied themselves vigorously to the oars, and in another quarter of an hour stepped safely on shore, and lost no time in rejoining their party, who were already at tea, and beginning to feel very anxious at their long delay.

"Well, the deuce!" exclaimed Bob, "you *have had* an adventure! Here is Marie with a broken leg, and Hélène has done her best to get devoured by an octopus! I knew I would not come out of this picnic without a scrape! Hélène, why did you not bring the octopus along with you? We might have boiled it with the shrimps, given a dinner party in its honour, and styled it *Ragôut à l'Octopus*, or *Au Victor Hugo!*"

Here Miss Mercer had much to say on the subject, and had already commenced a learned discourse with regard to octopus as food, which she assured them all was much thought of by the ancients, and which might still be met with in the Neapolitan markets. Here Bob took fright at the old lady's learned mood, and jumped up with a hue and cry, declared it was time to pack up hampers and order the carriages for the return home. The sun had set in all its splendour, and the full moon was rising in calm majesty, flooding earth and sea with its soft light, making the Haunted House more ghostly than ever.

As they whirled home past Rockaine Bay, Perelle Bay, and the Vazon, tired out and well pleased with their day's excursion, they were a happy-looking party. Often did they all look back upon it; and, to the lovers at

least, it was one never to be forgotten, for "there's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream." True, Captain Pierrepoint had not been so fortunate in his love venture as Mr. Lee, but his lady-love, on the other hand, had been tender, if undecided; and if he persevered in his attentions, she might, after all, be won "for ever and aye."

## CHAPTER VII.

THE next day Mr. de Maistre awoke to the fact that his niece had affianced herself to Mr. Lee, and, as her guardian, was formally asked for his consent. The parents of Bob and Hélène had died in their infancy, leaving them to the care of their uncle; and well he had fulfilled his trust, for they had found in him a father, and in the Manor House a home.

Mr. de Maistre was not exactly enchanted with the engagement, which had forestalled his own well-laid plans of a matrimonial alliance for his niece. The old squire of a neighbouring manor had expressed a very distinct admiration for her. The possessor of a fine house and lands, and a long rent-

roll, *here* was the man! When, alas for fickle woman! she must needs engage herself to a "confounded redcoat," a "beggarly sub. in a marching regiment." So stormed the old gentleman, as he sat in the midst of a solemn family conclave to discuss the pros and cons of the impending and important family event, which was to make or mar two lives. At length Mr. de Maistre's righteous wrath at the crossing of his plans began to spend itself, and the fiery but warm-hearted squire now addressed his niece :—

"Well, Hélène, you have made your choice, and must bide by it! I had formed other hopes for your welfare, but as you have elected to wed Mr. Lee, I shall raise no objection to the match, provided always that gentleman has the wherewithal to maintain a wife in comfort."

"Yes!" said Bob, with a solemn shake of

the head; "for we all know when 'poverty comes to the door, love flies out of the window.'"

"And," added Miss Mercer, with a sigh, "one cannot live on love!"

For she also had a leaning towards Mr. Laney, the old squire, who had taken care to ingratiate himself with this all-important old lady, paving his way with a liberal supply of choice flowers and fruit. And Miss Mercer again groaned audibly, as she sadly reflected that all this munificence would most certainly cease from this time forth for evermore. At this juncture Mr. Lee was ushered into the family council by Hélène, where he appeared like a warrior bold, all eagerness to do battle for his lady-love. Old Mr. de Maistre gazed sternly at him, Miss Mercer's face showed marked disapproval, Bob shrugged his shoulders and tried to look indifferent, and

Mrs. de Maistre was sobbing in chorus with Hélène, while Marie, true to her nature, looked proudly on at the *tableau*, and inwardly thanked Heaven *she* had not put her foot into it with Captain Pierrepoint, as she mentally made a note of the fact, that a poor suitor was decidedly *infra dig.* when hauled up before the family circle without anything tangible in his favour. Of course Mr. Lee, like a true Irishman, plunged into a lengthy speech with regard to his present means, which were not much, and his future prospects, which certainly might prove better; and on these distant hopes and expectations the family were fain to content themselves, as matters had evidently gone too far for any withdrawal. So it was finally decided that, with a good appointment and some money Mr. Lee would inherit eventually, with the property Hélène was entitled

to when she came of age in a year's time, they might marry and set up house in a modest way. Hereupon the family shook hands with Mr. Lee all round, and did their best to look cordial. He was invited to dinner every day, and given to understand that he might make himself at home. He was not a man to require pressing, and he soon made himself very much "at home" indeed, to Bob's disgust, with whom he had many a rub; for the former never in his heart quite forgave his sister for "throwing herself away," when she might have become the wife of rich old Laney, and the possessor of manor house, horses and carriages, and all that a woman holds dear in life (all save love). So Hélène dissented, and held her own, choosing rather to be poor in this world's goods, and rich in the one rare jewel which alone can never be bought or sold.

The engagement naturally occasioned much discussion with regard to family matters, and that evening many a funny story was told by Mr. de Maistre, as well as many a pathetic tale, of the narrow escapes and trials of his Hugenot forefathers.

"And now for the Family Legend!" said Mr. Lee. "Hélène was full of her ancestress and an old tombstone when we passed your parish church the other day. I could not make much out of it, however, so please enlighten me now we are on the topic."

"Oh, do!" exclaimed the whole party in chorus, and Marie, who had been strangely silent throughout this eventful day, now brightened up, and joined in the general shout of "Oh, do! do tell us the right version!"

"Well," said Mr. de Maistre, "I will give it to you as it has been handed down from

father to son. Most of the Huguenots destroyed all authentic family records, with the object of preventing their descendants from ever returning to France—so bitterly had they suffered; and many of those who *did* endeavour to save their valuables and papers lost them in their hurried flight, many escaping only in small fishing boats to these shores. My family was among the last-named luckless fugitives, for we have not anything but our name, the parish registers, and the tombstone of our ancestress, Marie de Brett, wherewith to identify ourselves. An old Marquise de Brett came over to Guernsey not long ago and claimed me for a relative. I would not have anything to say to her, however, rightly or wrongly. English my child has become, and English I wish her to remain; but it is curious to observe how anxious our French neighbours have

become to claim their Huguenot relatives whenever they get a chance. I know many who have responded to the call, and even gone so far as to alter their names back to the original French, where it had become Anglicised. Many have noble blood in their veins who little suspect it, so completely obliterated did they become to the past. Provence was the home of my ancestors, which they left at the Revolution. A De Maistre married a daughter of this Marie de Brett, of a noble Huguenot family from Poitiers, who had escaped from thence to England under the following romantic circumstances :—

"THE LEGEND.

"During the feud between the Roman Catholics and Huguenots, it appears that Marie de Brett was walking with her mother in the town of Poitiers, when she was

suddenly seized by the Roman Catholic soldiery and forcibly carried off. She was then hurried away to a convent, where they endeavoured to compel her to abjure the Protestant faith and embrace Popery. A confessor was appointed her for this purpose, but I am glad to say he did not succeed, and moreover this priest, by name Antoine de Lorme, was, on the contrary, converted to Protestantism, and determined to help Marie de Brett to escape from the convent. This was no easy matter, but Antoine de Lorme succeeded eventually in putting her into an empty wine cask, and in this manner himself conveyed her through France, across the frontier into the Low Countries, where her uncle was governor. There they were married; from whence they passed over to England, and thence to Guernsey, where Ambroise de Lorme became rector of our

parish, and where, it is said, the Litany, as appointed by the Church of England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, was read by him for the first time in the island."

"What an extraordinary and interesting account!" said Mr. Lee. "Only the unexpected happens! Truth is ever stranger than fiction! Take care, Miss Marie, that the strange fate of your ancestress and namesake does not befal you! They say, too, that 'history but repeats itself!'"

"Yes," said Bob, "I would not be at all surprised if that was the end of her, after all! Do look at the way she is taking it all in! Eyes and mouth wide open—a regular fly catcher!"

"Indeed," said Marie, "there is no fear of that. We saw enough priests when we were travelling in Italy, where they were as plentiful as crows, and as black and

as ugly. I often thought *then* that the Government ought to make soldiers of them; there would be some sense in *that*, and one could then entertain towards them some sort of respect and admiration. Do you know, I have an idea I should greatly look up to and respect a warrior priest."

"Well," said Miss Mercer, "you may have your wish fulfilled, for I hear that in France, at any rate, priests will no longer be exempt from military service; but I have no love for them, as you know, and in *my opinion* it would be a very good thing if they could *all* be wiped off the face of the earth."

"Well, it will be a good thing to make men of them, the lazy beggars!" chimed in Bob; "we could respect them as such, at any rate. I hate all their mummery, and *all cant in general*, for the matter of that."

In which liberal sentiment most of the party fully concurred, bringing this eventful family gathering to a close, though not the strange events recorded, which, as we shall read farther on, were again almost entirely re-enacted three hundred years later by the remote descendant of these very parties in question. So sweeping and levelling are the evolutions of Time, that, after all, "there is never anything *new* under the sun."

## CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW days later on the Manor House lawn was the scene of a very animated, not to say angry discussion. Afternoon tea had been brought out into the shade, and, too hot for tennis, Marie and Hélène were reclining on rugs spread on the grass, discussing events past, present, and future.

"I shall never be able to go to the ball," said Marie.

"Oh, yes, you will," replied Hélène; "your foot is already better, and here comes Captain Pierrepoint with Mr. Lee. I am sure his presence will bring health and healing. He is a very jolly little man.

I hope I shall soon have to congratulate you."

Marie had not time to reply before the two men joined them.

"How do you feel to-day, Miss de Maistre?" said Captain Pierrepoint. "I hope you have tried to keep quiet, and have not walked too much." And as he sat down by her side he handed her a small packet containing the latest mixture out for sprains, which he said must be rubbed in very frequently, and he was quite sure she would be well enough for the ball.

"Why don't you begin the rubbing process at once?" laughed Mr. Lee. "No one could do it better than you, Pierrepoint."

The latter looked nothing loth, Marie blushingly expostulated, Mr. Lee and Hélène were already moving off down the lawn, and the tale might have been a

different one to tell (on such small trifles hang great events), had not at this moment the attention of one and all of them been attracted to the sudden appearance of Miss Mercer, who was hurrying towards them in breathless haste, and as she reached the spot where they were, sank down exhausted in a garden chair, her face red with heat and excitement. She was indeed an object of pity, as she kept moaning and lamenting in broken sentences on the folly of mankind, and of one man in particular, it was evident.

"Miss Mercer! dear Miss Mercer!" exclaimed the two girls; "do tell us what has happened."

"Happened!" almost shrieked the old lady, as she jumped up and down, as was her wont when over-excited, causing her curls to vibrate in a manner fearful to behold. "Happened! Why, this is what

has happened: our Bob, *my* Bob, whom I thought the one sensible man in the world, has engaged himself to——" And here the old lady seemed so on the verge of hysteria, that Marie instinctively clutched at the soothing lotion, and Hélène rushed off into the house for cold water, while the two men had just made up their minds to give the old lady a salutary shaking, when Hélène reappeared with a tumbler of cold water, and begged Miss Mercer to take a good draught.

This she did, and it had the happy effect of a soothing restorative. Setting down the tumbler with a determined thump, as much as to say, "Now I am myself again," she looked searchingly at one and all of the party, as they gazed eagerly and inquiringly at her for a solution of the mystery. Then, without further delay, remarked,—

"Bob has engaged himself to Charité Trémouille, the pastrycook's daughter, in Fountain Street!"

"Impossible!" cried both men in the same breath.

"Possible, but not *probable*," said Marie sententiously.

"Bob must have lost his head," said Hélène.

"To a pretty face, again," remarked Marie; "and no doubt he will find it before long."

"He will do no such thing," said Miss Mercer, with the calmness of despair. "Report says he is over head and ears in love with the artful little minx and her pretty face, and I have no doubt the report says true, for when I had to go into the shop just now (*quite by chance, of course*), there was Bob in the Trémouilles' back parlour

leading from the shop, seated in an easy chair, a cigar in his mouth, and a foaming jug of ale by his side. Leaning over him, looking unutterable things, was Charité, while Bob was returning all the sweet looks with interest, and an energy wonderful to behold in one usually so phlegmatic. I had a good mind to interview her father on the subject then and there, for he is a most respectful and respectable man, and not likely to encourage his daughter in anything clandestine, especially with the heir of the Lord of the Manor of La Fontaine. However, thought I, 'prudence is the best part of valour,' so made my purchases, and walked out of the shop unobserved by Bob, who had not noticed my entrance into it, and with feelings more easily imagined than described." The young people here gave one another a knowing wink, for they all

thought she had just given them a very accurate illustration of the same. No one made any remark, however, so she proceeded as follows: "I had not gone very far up the Fountain Street, when I was overtaken and joined by Bob, in high good humour with himself and all the world, and quite unaware that I was in possession of his now open secret. 'Why, Miss Mercer!' he exclaimed, 'you are as gloomy and as black as night! Whenever or whatever has had the misfortune to cloud over your usually cheerful and benign countenance, and plunge it in gloom and chill? Upon my word, you make me shiver.' 'That you experience that somewhat disagreeable sensation is not surprising, seeing you have left *your* sunshine and warmth behind you in the Trémouilles' shop,' I replied sarcastically. 'In the shape of beer and tobacco, I suppose?'

he laughingly replied. 'Yes; *and* Charité Trémouille,' I rejoined. The murder was out. Bob coloured angrily. 'Whoever has been putting this notion into your head?' 'It is no longer a notion, it is a fact; for I saw it with my own eyes, and I want no further confirmation of the evidence of my senses. I have no longer any doubt that you ignore *who* you are, and from whence you have sprung, entrapped by a girl's pretty face, forgetting your duty to your family, and the time-honoured motto, *Noblesse oblige*.' 'She is of Huguenot descent, at any rate,' retorted Bob; 'and who knows? she is probably sprung from as good a stock as myself, though of course, *socially*, she is undoubtedly beneath me in the eyes of the world; but, after all, a fellow raises his wife to his own status, so there's an end of the matter, so far as that is concerned. Let's go home

and get some tea.' Upon which he walked off ahead of me in a great huff, and I have not seen anything of him since."

"Oh, here he comes, with Ida Le Messurier!" they all exclaimed. And sure enough, laughing and chaffing with this young lady, appeared the subject of all the foregone hubbub and excitement.

"By Jove! you *do* look hot, all of you."

"No wonder, after what I have been telling them," exclaimed Miss Mercer pointedly.

Ida opened her eyes inquiringly, and Bob walked away, smiling contemptuously, and calling on Ida for their game of tennis.

"I met Bob in a very bad humour," said she, "so I challenged him to a game of tennis; I knew you would not refuse me a cup of tea."

"Delighted to have you!" they all exclaimed, which was really the case.

Ida Le Messurier was a cousin of Marie de Maistre and of Bob and Hélène Le Gros (as, indeed, who are *not* cousins in Guernsey?), and an heiress to boot. She and Bob had always been good friends, so there had arisen a sort of tacit understanding between them that they would *one day* unite hands and keep the money in the family, to the great satisfaction of all concerned. But these good people, like many others before them, had "counted their chickens before they were hatched," and at the laughing glance of Charité Trémouille, these well-laid plans had been undermined. And, thought Miss Mercer, as she busied herself with the tea, causing the cups and saucers to rattle again at the bare idea, the whole plan will certainly collapse, unless I can devise a means to thwart the love affair. Shall I take Ida into my confidence or not? She

has set her heart on being mistress of the Manor, and is the person whose feelings will be the most wounded at any *contretemps*, and therefore the one who would be the most likely to aid me in thwarting the lovers; besides, she is too sharp to be long deceived. Yes; it is far better to tell her the whole truth now.

Accordingly, as soon as the game was over, "Ida," she called out, "will you take a turn with me in the garden?"

"Yes; to be sure, dear old lady." And passing her arm through Miss Mercer's, she made herself ready to battle and to combat anything disagreeable whatsoever. She was of a practical rather than romantic turn of mind, so by the time Miss Mercer had finished her tale of Bob's delinquencies, Ida had made up her mind how to act.

"Now, what is to be done?" asked Miss Mercer.

"Oh, it is very simple," replied Ida. "We must interview old Mr. Trémouille, make him understand the enormity of his daughter's offence in encouraging Bob's silly attentions, and then make him promise to prevent any further flirtation, and intercept all communication by letter. Bob will soon be going to India, and he will have probably forgotten even her existence at the end of another five years."

"What a good idea!" said Miss Mercer, who began to see a gleam of hope, and no further trouble in the matter. "We will go down into the Fountain Street the first thing to-morrow morning, you and I; there is no time to be lost."

And so it came to pass that these two women, not unkindly by nature, determined to stoop to a paltry action, their better feelings stifled, the one with horror of a family

*mésalliance*, and the other with pique at having been supplanted by so humble a rival. How they fared in their enterprise, and what came of it, remains to be seen.

## CHAPTER IX.

HE much-talked-of regimental ball takes place to-night. The mess and the ante-room at Fort George have been converted into a perfect bower of flowers and shrubs for the reception of the guests, and a large temporary room built outside for the dancing, with a raised platform for the magnificent band of the regiment, the like of which had never been heard in Guernsey, and has certainly never been surpassed. Guns, bayonets and flags are ranged round the rooms in every conceivable fashion, the whole lit up with innumerable wax lights reflected yet again and again by skilfully placed mirrors in every

available corner. The brilliancy of the officers' uniform, the beauty of the ladies, and their elegant toilets, made up a *tout ensemble* never to be forgotten by those who took part in it. Many "fair lilies" from the sister isle of Jersey had come over to swell the ranks of beauty, and (tell it not in Gath) with the certainty of cutting out their Guernsey neighbours, of whom they entertain a jealous, and somewhat unamiable rivalry. On this occasion, at any rate, they were doomed to disappointment, and it was afterwards unanimously declared that Guernsey held her own, both as regards beauty and dress. Hélène Le Gros in pale lavender made a soft and charming picture, and so thought Mr. Lee, as he proudly paraded his bride-elect up and down the ball-room. Marie de Maistre in plain white silk, fitting like a glove, showed off to perfection her

graceful figure, and suited well her hair and complexion. She was always interesting and a favourite, and came in for a large share of admiration; and though somewhat pale after her accident, was sufficiently convalescent to attend the ball, to Captain Pierrepoint's great satisfaction, who was busy securing her for the few dances she intended to attempt later on in the evening, when the room was less crowded, to the great chagrin of Tom Conelly, and a host of other admirers. Ida Le Messurier looked very stylish, and being a splendid dancer was always a favourite; and as she whirled past in the mazes of a waltz with a gallant and gay gunner, no one would have suspected the little cross in her matrimonial prospects. She was more animated than ever, as she determined to have another string to her bow, on the uncertainty of the issue of Bob's

"unfortunate attachment," as she called it. Bob looked on unmoved at her flirtation, merely commenting to himself that here was his pet theory of the attraction of opposites exemplified, for whereas his cousin Ida prided herself on being the possessor of an aristocratic Roman nose, the gunner's was painfully plebeian, and at this moment, from heat and excitement, a rosy red, which by no means improved it.

"Ah, he is sighing for his Charité," thought Ida, as she caught sight of Bob looking coldly on at the dancers. "Ah, he may sigh indeed!" And she plunged deeper than ever in the flirtation with the gunner, who, good man, came to the conclusion there was nothing to equal a Guernsey *belle* for fetching a fellow along. The ball was at its height. Supper had been announced. The dowagers had been conducted thither in due

forms of rank and precedence, this the happy signal for the supper dances, when, with a clear room and a good floor, a rare good waltz is to be enjoyed by all true lovers of the art. "Sweethearts" had just struck up a melodious strain, and Marie is carrying on an animated conversation with Tom Conelly in a retired nook of the ball-room. This handsome but somewhat languid youth was always greatly attracted by the clever, vivacious girl, and the flirtation was always a source of great annoyance to Captain Pierrepoint.

"This is *our dance*, Miss de Maistre," said the latter, "if you feel inclined to make the attempt, and trust yourself to *me*;" at the same time casting a withering glance on Tom Conelly. This roused all the latter's usual apathy, and with a quiet smile and a bow to his opponent, who had given his arm

to Marie, and was leading her away, he remarked to the latter,—

"Take care of your foot, Miss de Maistre: you can't fail to enjoy your dance;" and as they disappeared, he thought to himself, "Pierrepoint is awfully gone; but, bah! the girl is a deep one and a clever: she will fool him yet;" with which comfortable reflection he went off to the supper-room to console himself with game pie and iced champagne, where he came across Mrs. de Maistre, who made inquiries for Marie, who wished in her heart she would marry handsome Tom Conelly, with a nice little fortune of his own, and a prime favourite of hers; but, alas! for the vanity of all human wishes. In the meanwhile Pierrepoint and Marie had both thoroughly enjoyed their waltz together, for they were both perfect dancers.

"Oh, what a divine waltz!" said Marie.

"I am glad you do not feel the worse for it. That lotion must have worked wonders, but you must not try your foot too much; let us go and sit down in the ante-room. And how do you like your bouquet and cut flowers?"

"Oh, they are lovely! It is too kind of you to have sent them to me. Almost as bad as the gloves," she laughed.

"Well, I chose the flowers myself, and at any rate they are very becoming. You look perfect to-night. Your dress is charming."

"Now don't flatter me; you are usually very particular and fault-finding."

"You are absolutely faultless to-night; and oh, Miss de Maistre, I wish you would believe me, and try and be serious for once. I go away on leave to-morrow; will you not give me some hope of winning you? My life without you will be the abomination of

desolation! Cannot you love me a little in return? I will do all in my power to make you happy."

What passed at that moment in the girl's heart it would be difficult to reveal. She was only just out, a happy home, and all life before her, and at sweet seventeen, who looks into the dark impenetrable future? Life appears but one long path of sunshine and flowers. Her dream had always been one of rank and wealth. Should she be true to the promptings of her heart, and lay the tinsel by for ever? There was a long silence. It almost seemed as if Love's pleadings had prevailed; but no. Pride and ambition are not so easily uprooted; again they weighed heavier in the balance. And once more Pierrepoint's voice sounds low and pleading as he reiterates the question, "Will you marry me?"

He seized her hand eagerly, and gazed long and passionately into her eyes; then, as she slowly rose from where they were sitting, her voice sounded strange and far distant, as she murmured with downcast eyes, not daring to meet his glance, "I do not love you enough. I cannot marry you."

"You love some one else then, after all this?" he said with suppressed anger and emotion.

"No! but I have formed other views with regard to marriage! And I fail to come up to your high standard of it."

"Well! so let it be!" he said bitterly. "May you never have cause to regret your decision!"

He released her hand, and making the customary formal bow, left her without another word or look. Oh! strange fatality! and almost beyond belief! At that very

moment, and in that very room, standing a silent spectator of the animated scene, was the man whom Marie had as yet only dreamed of, who was one day to appear, like a veritable fairy prince, ready to bestow on her all her cherished desires and longings. A fine tall artilleryman in private's uniform has found his way to the entrance of the ball-room, impelled thither from motives of curiosity alone, for he has long since ceased caring for such festive scenes, he who had been the gayest of the gay, and sought out by all his acquaintances. Yes! standing there a silent, and at first unmoved, spectator is the scion of a noble house, direct heir to a coronet and a fortune. Who could have guessed it? At an age when most men are but in their prime, he is aged and grey-haired. He has run through two successive fortunes, and his last legacy gives

him one hundred a year, and is so tied down that he cannot spend and squander away the capital. Ten years ago he enlisted, and ever since has been knocking about the world with his brigade, and his family and friends had quite lost sight of him under an assumed name. But what a handsome man he still is, and, in spite of all his sins and weaknesses, there is still in him much possibility for good. He looks on at first in a listless, preoccupied manner. Suddenly a rapid change comes over his expression. He bends eagerly forward to watch the dancers, and is still rooted to the spot, as, the dance at last over, Captain Pierrepoint and Marie pass close by him on their way to the anteroom, and, as we have already seen, to the fatal conclusion of all poor Pierrepoint's hopes and aspirations. The Honourable Colley, otherwise Gunner Coles, is only

aroused from his reverie by a smart slap on the back from a comrade, as he exclaims,—

"Well, Coles, what the deuce are you thinking about? Have you been magnetised or whatever else they call these new-fangled dodges? It is time to turn in!' and taking him by the arm, marches him off to barracks. Not to sleep, however. Long and anxiously he ponders over his romantic *rencontre*, which has caused such a miraculous change in the current of his life. To win her he is determined; but how set about it? He had had no difficulty in ascertaining her name and position at the ball, for she and her cousin had been the topic of general admiration. He had almost made up his mind he would pay a call at the Manor House, ask to see her father, and declare himself then and there. Prudence, however, got the better

of this resolve, for he wisely reflected he was not at that moment a very desirable suitor, or likely to find favour with the girl's father. He therefore wisely decided he would write off to his old school friend, Ted Enderby, at Dartmouth, and ask him for his help and advice, for he never failed him, and always held out a helping hand. Meanwhile the ball was fast drawing to a close. Mrs. de Maistre had, with some difficulty, at last succeeded in gathering her family together for the return home, and great was her astonishment that no Captain Pierrepoint came to cloak them, or see them to their carriage when announced. Marie maintained a resolute silence during the drive, and her pent-up feelings only gave way when alone in her own room. Then for the first time she fully realized the situation. Misgiving for the future came

over her, and remorse for that which had gone beyond recall. She threw herself in her ball dress on the bed, and burst into a storm of tears. This brought relief, and, as it ever does to youth, hope and consolation. Slowly and sadly she arose, and placed carefully in water the flowers she had worn that night—this the last token and gift of a first love. Daylight had already dawned, and the birds had already commenced their roundelay, as she fell into a heavy sleep, and the sorrowful words of an old song came over her in her dreams, ringing out as it were the knell of her past life and girlish happiness, with their

> "Break, break, break,
> At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
> But the tender grace of a day that is dead
> Shall never come back to me!"

## CHAPTER X.

HÉLÈNE LE GROS' marriage followed the engagement in due course, with all the usual state and paraphernalia of a wedding in the old cathedral church of Saint Peter in the Port, of which its citizens are justly proud, it being a splendid specimen of Norman architecture, in which all lovers of the same will delight, now it has been restored to its pristine beauty, and enriched with many splendid modern works of art. Half Guernsey turned out to witness the nuptials of the niece of the squire of La Fontaine, who was declared to have been the very prettiest bride ever wed there,—the *last*

is always the *best* with these good folks,—and Marie the very handsomest of the bridesmaids, and one, said the gossips, who would one day make a great match. Miss Mercer graced the ceremony with her presence in an antique gown of rustling grey satin, with a pattern so quaintly suggestive of thunder and lightning that it was then and there dubbed "The Storm" by Bob, and so it was ever after named by the rest of the family and the lady's friends in general.

As she walked down the aisle in this imposing attire, preceded by the verger and his wand of state,—as was the custom at these ceremonies in the good old by-gone days,—even *her* usual imperturbability was somewhat shaken, and she afterwards confessed to such a mighty revulsion during that solemn walk that she could account for

it neither more nor less than the natural trepidation of a bride elect about to be sacrificed at the hymeneal altar. This afforded Bob much fun and amusement, and the poor old lady had to go through an immense amount of honest chaff in consequence, though, could Bob have guessed what a finger she had had in his pie, things might have gone worse with her on that festive occasion. As it was, Bob only realized the fact that his love-making had come to an abrupt termination. For so it happened. Miss Mercer had hobnobbed down the Fountain Street, accompanied by Ida Le Messurier, one fine morning, on mischief bent, and had pleaded her cause to some good purpose. As luck would have it, old Mr. Trémouille was standing at the door of his shop, imbibing the fresh salt breeze. Now was Miss

Mercer's time! So, stepping in with the ostensible purpose of buying his cakes, she, like a good diplomatist, opened fire by extolling their superior quality. Having put the old pastry-cook into a thorough good humour, she thought she might venture upon more delicate ground. Next to his far-famed cakes there was only one thing dearer to his pride, and that was his daughter Charité!

"No, ma'am! No one ever complains of my cakes!" said the old man with a beaming face. "I make a pride of 'em! I do! The best Guernsey butter, the best of everything! And, law bless you, ma'am! I never take no count of the eggs!"

"I'm quite sure you don't!" exclaimed both ladies.

"You are quite the Guernsey Gunter," said Ida sweetly.

"You're right there, miss!" said the good man, his honest mouth expanding to quite an alarming extent with smiles of pride and joy. "I'm quite a 'gun' in my line, as I often tell my Charité!" [This worthy had never heard of the famous London confectioner, hence his unwitting fun.] "Unfortunately, Charité don't take kindly to my trade. Girls now-a-days want to be too 'complish'd,' play the 'piana,' and all that sort o' thing."

"Very sad!" remarked both ladies, with a gentle sigh and shake of the head.

"Raising the standard of 'education,' they call it, ma'am!"

"Well!" replied Miss Mercer, "if it raises the moral tone as well" (and here she looked insinuatingly doubtful), "there will not be anything to say against it."

"And so it is, ma'am, I conclude, for

Charité is the very best of lassies!" And here the good man plunged his hands into his capacious pilot-coat pockets, with a gesture as much as to say, "You never mean to gainsay *that*!"

"Oh no, oh no, Mr. Trémouille," hastily replied Miss Mercer, for she felt she was on delicate ground, and if not careful, it might collapse before she had said her "say." "I am sure she is a good girl; Mrs. Lee always said she was the very best of her Sunday School scholars."

"Ah! Charité is mighty fond of Miss Hélène! And a sweet crittur she is! Wish her joy in her new life, ma'am, that I do! And there's her brother, Mr. Bob, too! A real nice gentleman; always got a cheery word for every one!"

Here was the golden opportunity at last! Ida pricked up her ears and gave Miss

Mercer a vigorous nudge, while the latter continued softly,—

"Ah, yes, Mr. Trémouille; still, young men *will* be young men, you know; and it is always well to be prudent! Charité is very pretty and attractive, and perhaps a *little* fond of flirting!"

"P'r'aps she is, ma'am; but, in my humble opinion, if girls don't flirt, it's 'cause they don't get the chance on it." And here the old man chuckled audibly.

"Just so," replied Miss Mercer in a conciliatory tone; "but that is all the more reason that you must act prudently; for if the gossips see Charité talking and laughing with young men in the shop and in the back parlour, you know they *will* talk and spread false reports."

"Ah, to be sure! to be sure! And the girl has no mother to look after her," he

added reflectively. "I won't have her down here no more." Then, becoming quite confidential, he imparted to his listeners how a certain rich ironmonger opposite had become smitten by Charité's charms, and had offered her himself and his worldly goods, the latter finding special favour with the old man, who had a keen eye to business.

"Capital!" exclaimed both ladies, who in this happy circumstance saw one chance less of Bob's being entangled. "Capital! You ought to bring the match about as soon as possible."

"So I would, ma'am, if I had my way; but my girl says she must take her time about it; so there's nothing to be done until she comes round."

Here Miss Mercer groaned aloud; and the old man, putting it down to sympathy and emboldened thereby, seized both her

hands, and giving them a hearty shake, said,—

"Thank you kindly for your good advice, ma'am."

"Not at all, Mr. Trémouille; but one word more at parting. If you want your matrimonial plan to prosper, beware of all love letters."

"Law bless you! ma'am, if I see any of them nasty things a-coming here, I'll pitch them into the fire or my waste-paper basket, take my word for it!"

The town church bell here commenced to ring for matins, a call Miss Mercer never neglected when business took her into the town, so making some purchases, she and Ida wished old Trémouille "Good-morning," and departed, well satisfied with their adventure, and fully convinced that they had knocked a nail in the right place. What

could they now do better than invoke a blessing on it?

So it came to pass that Charité was henceforth rarely seen by her father's customers and admirers. Bob had gone as usual for his smoke and glass of beer. But where was Charité? His goddess was invisible. This, no doubt, was why both cigars and beer were fast losing their flavour. Bob was in despair. He must shortly sail for India! He was determined to have a farewell interview, notwithstanding all the father's precautions, who had evidently "smelt a rat," and was on the alert. He first of all sent a tender missive through the post. No answer came. The letter must have miscarried. No use to trust the post; he would see her himself. She always attended afternoon service at the old cathedral church, and alone, old Trémouille making a point of

indulging in an afternoon nap, on the comfortable principle that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

The next Sunday afternoon saw Bob wending his way down the Fountain Street. The quaint old chimes of St. Peter in the Port were ringing a joyful peal to remind all true worshippers of their bounden duty and service. The church loomed in sight. Suddenly the door of an old-fashioned house softly opened, and tripping lightly down the stone steps appeared the tall, lithe form of a young girl, Prayer-book in hand. She looked neither to the right nor to the left, but walking swiftly, disappeared through the west porch. It was Charité Trémouille. Bob followed in all haste, but, making a slight *détour*, entered at another door, and took his seat behind one of the old Norman

pillars facing the west aisle. The organ had just finished the voluntary. The congregation rose, and there, just under the large west window, Bob beheld his "beatific vision." The afternoon sun was streaming through the painted glass, and lighting up the crucifixion thereon depicted to a blood red, flooding the western aisle in the same vivid colouring. Charité's head came out in bold relief from under her broad-brimmed hat, singularly becoming to the fair hair and delicate, regular features. "Like the Madonna," soliloquized Bob. With some difficulty he concentrated his attention on the service. The sermon at length commenced. The good priest was somewhat of a drone, and produced a drowsy sensation. Then Bob's eyes and thoughts wandered. He saw only the "Madonna." He fell a-thinking, and among other in-

congruous thoughts which flitted through his brain up came this one,—

"I wonder whether Duke Robert of Normandy's pretty *blanchisseuse* was half so pretty? If so, no wonder he made a fool of himself."

The droning still went on. Then came the sober reflection, "But he *was Duke Robert*, and I am only Bob Le Gros. *There's* the difference, and a vast one." Here the droning came to an end. The sermon was over, and the organ thundered out a magnificent voluntary. The congregation bustled out into the air and sunshine, most of the good people to enjoy an afternoon walk on the Castle Cornet Breakwater, the "Madonna" among the number. Bob was soon by her side, asking permission to escort her.

"Ah, Charité, what has become of you all

this time? Why have you been hiding yourself?"

"Oh, the *père* is very strict now," said she. "I think some one must have been putting ideas into his head. And then, besides, you know, I am in reserve for the rich ironmonger," said she, saucily tossing her pretty head into the air, with a well-feigned look of offended dignity.

"Hang the ironmonger!" said Bob. "Promise me you will not have anything to say to him."

"Well, five years is a long time to keep silence with a friendly neighbour," said she, laughing; "however, I will try."

"And you will promise to write to me, and answer all my letters?"

"I'll promise anything you like," replied Charité, relenting like a true maiden and veritable love-lorn damsel, which in truth she was.

"And when I return in five years I will marry you in the face of all opposition."

And so they talked and walked, exchanging mutual vows.

It was their last meeting. A few days later on, on a cold, foggy spring morning, the De Maistres' family coach came rattling down the Fountain Street to meet the Southampton boat, well piled up with luggage outside, and inside Bob Le Gros, his cousin Marie, and Miss Mercer, the former looking the picture of manly self-control as he tried, not ineffectually, to hide the true state of his feelings from his family. This morning there was no ringing of bells, no "beatific vision," only a sorrowful, tear-stained maiden, peeping furtively behind a casement of the Trémouilles' old-fashioned house, to catch a last glimpse of her departing lover. Even the gilt weather-cock on

the top of the church steeple, which last Sunday afternoon Bob almost fancied to be crowing in joyful unison with the bells, appeared to him this morning a melancholy and ugly object enough, peering out at him through the cold grey fog. So easily do all objects, animate and inanimate, impress us, according to the state of our own feelings. The landing-stage, with its cartloads of hampers for Covent Garden Market, was soon reached ; and after much lading of the vessel, the good ship *Britannia* steamed out of the harbour, amidst much waving of handkerchiefs from friends on board and those on shore, and Bob was borne away from home for the dismal space of five years.

## CHAPTER XI.

MARIE DE MAISTRE had been invited by her friend, Mrs. Ted Enderby, to pay her a visit in her charming Devonshire home, a quaint, old-fashioned gabled house, perched on the top of a steep hill just out of the old town of Dartmouth, with a view of the harbour and, in the distance, the winding Dart.

It is a glorious afternoon in the early autumn, and the soft Devonshire air is almost as warm as in summer. The bow windows of the tea room are wide open, overlooking a pretty expanse of lawn and flower-beds, and beyond is the tennis court, where Ted Enderby and his friend, Mr. Colley, are finishing a set. Mrs. Enderby,

a beautiful woman of five-and-twenty, is lounging comfortably in an easy chair, with tea and coffee daintily set out before her, fruit and Devonshire cream. Two pretty golden-haired children, the image of their lovely mother (who was considered the handsomest woman in South Devon), were seated at her side, gazing longingly at the good things before them, and anxiously inquiring whether papa and "Dolly" were not soon coming in to partake of them; which anxiety, their mother laughingly remarked, was "one for the gentlemen, and two for themselves." Marie de Maistre was sitting in a bow window, gazing dreamily out on the garden and the distant tennis players. In her heart she also echoed the wish of the little girls, for Mr. Colley, who had been invited on a visit simultaneously with herself, had proved a most ardent

admirer, and to him she was already affianced, thanks to the good offices of their mutual friends the Enderbys. Though not deeply in love with Mr. Colley, still there was much in him to attract and interest a young girl of twenty. Handsome, distinguished-looking, and heir to a proud old title, the fact that he had been a considerable scapegrace would not have weighed very heavily with most girls, and Marie proved no exception to the rule. And was there not also something very sweet and flattering to her girl's vanity, that *she* had been the cause of his reform and anxiety to settle down and lead a new life? As she saw the gentlemen now approaching the house she left the window, and walking across the room, threw her arms around her friend's neck, and kissing her very lovingly, said,—

"Ah! dear Fanny, you are always so

good to me! and your husband has been so generous and kind to Mr. Colley; we owe you a debt of gratitude! That we two great friends should elect to marry two great friends is a curious evolution of the wheel of time!"

"And pleasant as curious," said Fanny Enderby warmly, giving her friend a hearty embrace. "You and I have always been like sisters, and Ted and Charlie Colley like brothers, so say no more about it. We were truly delighted when he told us of your conquest, and at once recognised your photograph in my book; a truly fortunate and happy coincidence—the most romantic thing out! And you have so much character and good sense, we feel sure you are the very girl for him! He has become so steady too; there can be no doubt he is thoroughly in earnest."

"Well," sighed Marie, "the difficulty will be to make our mutual friends and relations believe in his reformation!"

"Oh! don't be alarmed about that, dear!" replied Mrs. Enderby. "Engagements never run quite smoothly just at first, and you know Charlie has been very trying; but his family cannot fail to be pleased eventually at his reformation; and, after all, he is *the heir*, and they have always been very fond of him; so cheer up, for, you know, 'There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune!'"

Further discussion was here stopped by the entrance of Mr. Enderby and his friend, Mr. Colley; and in the latter we easily recognise our old acquaintance, Gunner Coles, of the eventful Guernsey ball.

"Well, Miss de Maistre," said Ted Enderby, "I hope you and my wife have

had a good gossip! There is not anything she enjoys more than a talk over Guernsey and the old days! She always looks back on them with pleasure, and can never forget her old school days and acquaintances."

"And I have also good reason to remember the island," said Mr. Colley, as he handed Marie a cup of tea; and seating himself beside her, gazed admiringly and affectionately at her. Then turning to the Enderbys, he said, "I have heard to-day from my uncle, Admiral Colley, who expresses himself as never astonished at anything remarkable I may say or do. He begs to congratulate me on my engagement, but refuses all substantial aid at present, and as regards the future, states his intention of leaving every jot and tittle of his property to the *title*, *whoever* may succeed to it!"

"Well," said Ted Enderby, "I think you

have all the chances in your favour at present."

"I think so too," said his wife, "and feel sure we may trust to your good luck, and begin to think of marriage and Marie's all-important trousseau."

"And Auntie Marie has promised we shall be her bridesmaids," exclaimed the little girls eagerly.

Here Mr. Enderby interposed, and suggested that Marie and his wife should go with himself and Mr. Colley for a row up the river, to which they gave a ready assent. Mr. Enderby was not usually so complaisant towards his wife's friends. A clever, cynical man, he professed very little liking or admiration for the weaker sex, who, on the other hand, thoroughly feared and disliked his studied sarcasms. He had not succeeded in disconcerting Marie, however. The high-

spirited girl was not easily brow-beaten, and in an encounter he found her a very fair match ; and on more than one occasion she had given him some home thrusts which he had found difficult to parry. Her force of character and determination, combined with great tact and good temper, had quite won him over to the enemy; and though, according to his Puritanical notions, she was somewhat fast, on the whole he felt good cause for satisfaction that his old chum had seen and successfully wooed her, and that, notwithstanding all his escapades, he was likely to turn out a lucky fellow after all, with title, fortune, and a rare jolly wife.

Such were Mr. Enderby's comfortable reflections, as he steered the boat while the three others rowed up the river to the sign of the Golden Lion. Here they all got out to rest and refresh themselves with tea and the inevitable periwinkles.

Tea over, they determined to stroll along the bank of the river in search of wild flowers, which in the lovely warm South Devon climate grow in great variety and profusion. Lost in this pleasing occupation, Mr. Colley and Marie had wandered some distance ahead of the Enderbys. A sudden bend of the river shut them entirely out of view, and at the same time a novel and picturesque sight presented itself to their gaze, in a large gipsy encampment. The evening meal was just over; the men were lying full length on the grass, smoking long clay pipes, and the women were seated in groups, or standing idly about, watching a swarm of children at play. The harvest moon, which was just rising, threw a soft light on the scene, and Mr. Colley and Marie stood still and unnoticed for a moment, admiring the picture before them. For one

brief moment only. A dog belonging to the tribe soon spied out the intruders, and giving the alarm, in another instant a whole yelping crew were around them, much to poor Marie's fright and discomfiture, who was for beating a hasty retreat.

At this juncture, however, the men roused themselves sufficiently to call off the dogs, while a great chattering and excitement took place among the women. And now a dark handsome girl, with long black hair, wearing a picturesque red turban, came forward, and with many gesticulations gave them to understand she was more than willing to tell them their fortunes for a consideration, at the same time bestowing on them the most entreating glances, and smiling and displaying two faultless rows of pearly teeth. Marie had now got over her fright, and, girl like, was all anxiety to pry into the future and learn her fate.

"Oh, what fun!" she exclaimed. "I'll have my fortune told first; then you must have yours, Charlie!"

She held out her fair white hand to the swarthy gipsy, on the third finger of which sparkled a diamond hoop, her engagement ring. The gipsy snatched eagerly at the outstretched hand, and at the same moment darted a look of recognition and anger at Charlie Colley. Their eyes met, and if ever the latter looked upon a countenance which betrayed undying hatred and deep revenge, it was on this gipsy girl's. He turned deadly pale, for in that moment he also recognised one whom he had loved and forsaken, and never thought to have met again. A deep shadow seemed in an instant to come over him. Were his sins always to find him out, and was he never to find "rest unto his soul"? He shuddered as he saw

Marie's hand in contact with this gipsy girl's, and he waited breathlessly for the oracle. It was not long coming. The gipsy smiled no longer. She raised her voice to a sort of dirge, and delivered the following rhyme :—

"Lady fair, what brings you here?
A fair man's love! Beware!
Why need you fear?
A dark man hates! Begone!
Oh, lady fair, beware! beware!"

She dropped Marie's hand, and gazed with her large dreamy eyes straight before her, and in her queenly grace appeared like a veritable prophetess.

"What an odd prophecy!" exclaimed Marie, after a short pause; and though she tried to smile, it was evident the incident had cast a gloom over her bright spirits.

"Now, Charlie, it is your turn," she said, turning to him. Very reluctantly he held

out his hand to the gipsy, and taking it in hers, she once more raised her voice to a monotonous dirge, and uttered these words :

" Love lightly given, deeply won,
Was woman's shame, to false man, fun ;
The first, the plaything of an hour,
Was left to die, a broken flower.
She'll meet again in blood and strife,
The fell destroyer of her life ;
In vain he'll strive to avert his doom,
He'll sink with her to death and gloom."

The gipsy dropped Colley's hand with a gesture of impatience and anger, and not deigning to notice the money he held out to her, turned on her heel, and walked off. Charlie Colley burst out laughing.

" Come, Marie mine," said he, " we have had enough of this. Let us go and find the Enderbys. They will wonder what has become of us ; " and slipping her arm through his, they retraced their steps to the boat.

Here they found the Enderbys awaiting their return.

"So you have had your fortunes told!" they exclaimed, and laughed heartily on hearing the story.

"Your fates were a little weird and gloomy, but who believes in fortune-telling? Certainly never when it is disagreeable!" laughed Fanny Enderby. "Come, let us row back, and forget all about it."

The return journey was accomplished in less than half the time taken in coming. They let the boat drift with the tide, which bore them all too rapidly down, so they all agreed.

"This is a beautiful river, is it not, Marie?" whispered Charlie Colley; "it never struck me as so lovely before. You must have given the finishing touch to the picture! The old rhyme, too, seems so sin-

gularly appropriate to-night. You know it, do you not ?—

'River of Dart, river of Dart,
Every year
Thou winnest a heart.'"

"It is more appropriate than the gipsy's, at any rate," laughingly rejoined Marie, "and I am glad I have made you happy."

"You have done more," he said solemnly; "you have 'saved a soul alive.'"

At this moment a loud rustling noise among the thick willows on the bank made them all start involuntarily. They listened attentively, but all was again silent.

"A water-rat," laughed Charlie Colley; "our nerves must be very out of tune to be disturbed by so slight a sound."

"That comes of meddling with gipsies," laughed Mr. Enderby.

The boat soon after reached its destina-

tion. Marie and Charlie Colley walked arm in arm together up the river bank and through the lanes back to the house. Meanwhile, on the other side of the high hedge, just a few paces behind them, followed a man's dark form with the noiselessness and stealthiness of a cat. Ever and anon raising his head cautiously, he peered through the hedge to keep them in sight. The house in view, they left the lane and crossed the road leading to it. The gipsy hissed out a sharp oath of satisfaction at having successfully tracked them, and having watched them all safely enter, struck out into the open, and made his way back to the encampment.

## CHAPTER XII.

PROFOUND stillness now reigned in the gipsy encampment, where a few hours before all had been noise and bustle. As the gipsy approached it he gave a long low whistle, which was instantly answered by a peculiar sort of cry, and a moment after there appeared the tall form of the gipsy girl, who came swiftly forward to meet the man.

"Well?" said the girl inquiringly, "what news?"

The man grinned horribly as he answered meaningly,—

"I've tracked the fox to his hole. He can't escape. You will be avenged. I

followed him up closely, and overheard enough to know that he will be leaving Dartmouth for Torquay in a couple of days by carriage and alone. That will be my opportunity. You don't relent, do you?" said he, with a searching look at the girl's face. The question seemed hardly necessary, nor her answer, for there was no relenting in the hard, set expression of the beautiful face before him.

"Love was sweet," she murmured; then aloud and emphatically she answered, "Hate and revenge are sweeter; do your worst."

"And my reward?"

"Myself!" said the girl, with a grace and dignity a queen might have envied.

"'Tis well," replied the man, and he proceeded to sketch out his plan of action.

Daylight was already dawning before the two separated. And what had Charlie

Colley done to call down such dire revenge on the part of the gipsies, Elvira and Guiseppe? for so they were named. This; that in one of his wild freaks two or three years before, when on a wandering excursion in the wilds of Dartmoor, he had come across a band of gipsies and joined them. Elvira was the daughter of the gipsy king, strikingly beautiful. It was not astonishing that Colley had been struck with her beauty. On the other hand, the girl fell desperately in love with the handsome and romantic stranger, who had to all appearance thrown in his lot with her tribe. They went through some gipsy rite which made them man and wife. Then followed some weeks of unalloyed happiness for Elvira; for so long as Colley was interested and amused, all went well with her. Meanwhile Guiseppe viewed these proceedings with anger and dismay, for

he also loved the beautiful Elvira, and had entertained every hope of winning her. Now, alas! his suit was a hopeless one, for ever since the advent of the handsome stranger in their midst, Elvira had turned a deaf ear to all his entreaties. Guiseppe had to retire from the contest with his hated rival.

The novelty of the situation at length began to wear off for Colley. Elvira's barbaric beauty and independent ways began to lose their charm, and then came serious thoughts of freeing himself from the fetters he had so rashly forged. Their wanderings had brought them to Chagford, on the outskirts of the forest. Here they fell in with a recruiting sergeant, and then came the idea of escaping out of this mad venture, and all the difficulties it was bringing in its train, by enlisting. Not that he was without

remorse at thus forsaking and betraying Elvira. No. And if he could possibly have taken this wild specimen of humanity with him, no doubt he would have done so; but he knew he might as well attempt to tame a young tigress as expect Elvira ever to conform to the ways and rules of the civilized world. She would but pine for her free gipsy life. What good, then, to remove her from her gipsy surroundings? The idea could not be entertained. She might in the first moment of betrayal give way to a passionate outburst of grief, but she would soon settle back to her old life and wandering ways, and forget all about him. He accordingly one day made an excuse to go alone into the town of Chagford. There he offered himself to the busily recruiting sergeant, and without so much as a farewell word to Elvira, that same night found him

whirling away to Exeter, *en route* for Portsmouth, to join a battery of Royal Artillery.

Meanwhile great was the consternation of the gipsies, and of Elvira in particular, at his non-appearance. As Colley had foreseen, Elvira at first gave way to a passionate outburst of grief and despair. But, contrary to his expectations, she did not proceed straightway to bury her wrongs in forgetfulness. They gave place to undying hatred and revenge, which Guiseppe artfully and carefully fostered, for in their growth alone he saw a chance of the success of his own schemes. Guiseppe knew that Elvira would never love Colley more. If he could prove a useful instrument in her hands towards accomplishing her revenge, could he not claim her as the price of his reward? Some years had passed, however, and both seemed farther off than ever from attaining their

respective wishes, when lo! Colley had suddenly appeared before the astonished Elvira, in the manner previously related. She lost no time in communicating the important information to Guiseppe, who, swift as a hare, and with all the cunning of his race, followed Colley and Marie to the boat, and thence along the bank down the river to the Enderbys' house. Meanwhile, Colley's thoughts that night were anything but agreeable, as he reflected on the untoward *rencontre* with his old love; and though he tried to dismiss the subject, it ever came uppermost in his thoughts, filling him with a strange foreboding of evil.

A week later and the day had arrived when Colley was to take his departure for Torquay, to visit his ancestral home, and make his peace with his family. All day long Marie had been possessed with an un-

accountable dread and presentiment of evil, and now, as in the gloaming the dogcart stood before the door ready for Colley, the feeling became so intense that she rushed off to Mrs. Enderby, begging of her to try and persuade him to take some one with him. "Well, to allay your fears," said Mrs. Enderby, "I will do all I can to persuade him to let Ted accompany him. The sort of feeling which has taken possession of you must be very unpleasant; but I fear Charlie will never consent to it, he will only laugh!"

And laugh he did outrageously when Mrs. Enderby, finding him in her husband's study, mentioned Marie's strange uneasiness. "The gipsy again, I'll be bound!" laughed Mr. Enderby, and he added with his usual sarcasm, "Lucky woman among her sex, to have made a *lasting impression*!"

Colley made no remark. His own undefinable fears kept him silent. It certainly was very provoking that both he and Marie should be possessed of the same uneasiness; but not being in any way superstitious, he finally dismissed the subject with a laugh and a shrug of his shoulders, as he shook hands with the Enderbys and bade them farewell, expressing many hopes of soon meeting again.

Marie they found on the doorstep with the two little girls, the latter in great distress at Colley's departure, with whom they had struck up a great friendship; for never before had they met any one with such an inexhaustible supply of toffee and sweets. They clung tenaciously to him, and it was only after many promises of a speedy return that they consented to let him go. Marie was the last to whom he bade farewell, and as

he kissed her fondly he whispered, "Not for long, dearest, not for long; when we meet again, we part no more!"

Marie was sobbing bitterly, for she felt as certain as she stood there (*why*, she knew not) that she was looking her last on this man who had so strangely crossed her path in life.

Colley sprang into the dogcart, and waving last adieux, took the reins, and trotting rapidly down the walk, was soon out of sight.

Meanwhile, had Captain Pierrepoint passed completely out of Marie's life and thoughts? From the former *yes!* but from the latter, that could *never* be! She had often wondered what had become of him since the night they had parted just a year ago? He had exchanged into a regiment on active service at the Cape, and that was all she knew of his whereabouts, and of anything in

connection with him. As she turned slowly back into the house with Mrs. Enderby, the latter said,—

"We have not read the papers to-day, Marie; look in the *Daily News*, dear, and see if some one won't interest us—born, married, or dead."

Marie took up the announcement column, and looking carelessly through it, was just about throwing it down again, when the name Pierrepoint arrested her. Another look, and she read as follows: "In South Africa, killed in action, Hugh Pierrepoint, Captain in the Carabineers."

The shock was tremendous: she read and re-read the fatal news. Several times she tried to speak; she was unable to utter a sound. There she sat on, gazing at the paragraph, every word of which seemed burning itself into her brain, while her body

seemed gradually turning into a lump of ice. Every sound seemed painfully intensified, from the buzzing of a blue-bottle which was thumping itself against the half-closed window in a vain attempt to fly out, to the distant barking of a dog. The ticking of the clock on the mantel-shelf seemed to her fevered brain like a huge hammer, beating out her life blood with every stroke. Never to her dying day did she ever forget it. The feeling was fast becoming unendurable, as she sat on in this rigid, overwrought state, feebly wondering what would come and break the tension. She began to wish that the house would topple down, and bury her under its ruins: *anything* would be a relief! Fortunately, it came with the sound of her friend's voice. Mrs. Enderby began to wonder at her long silence—she was usually so talkative and argumentative—and looking

up from her work she was startled to see the expression of Marie's face. Perceiving something must have happened, Mrs. Enderby hastened up to her, saying,—

"Oh, Marie dear, whatever is the matter with you? Are you ill?"

The sound of her friend's voice at length gave Marie the necessary shock to bring her back to her normal state, and uttering a short, sharp cry of pain, she threw herself into her friend's arms, and burst into tears. Then, after the first fit of grief had somewhat subsided, Mrs. Enderby induced Marie to relate to her her love episode with Captain Pierrepoint, of which she had before heard some faint rumours. She felt indeed truly sorry for Marie's remorse, and her despair at her old love's tragic fate. In such a case, however, words are unavailing; time only can heal the wound. So she trusted it

would be with Marie, whose approaching marriage with Mr. Colley would do much to arouse her and give her a new appreciation of life. Not yet awhile, however, was a new life to be opened up to Marie; the fatal shadows were already closing around her path, and before the dawn of another day she was to be reft of the new love, as well as of the old.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE autumn evening was slowly fading into night as Charlie Colley neared the last steep hill he had to climb before sighting Torquay, after which half an hour's further drive would bring him to his destination. His reflections during the solitary drive had not been of such a pleasant nature as to give him any wish to prolong it, for somehow or other all the events of his strange life came crowding into his memory like so many ghosts of a long-forgotten past. The present, with its joyous hopes and aspirations, seemed for the moment utterly obliterated, and, like a drowning man catching at a straw, he saw and

remembered only every word and deed of his in the past, down to the most trivial incidents. Vainly he tried to shake off the horrid nightmare!

He urged on the horse, and longed as he had never in his life before for the society of some human creature, and fervently prayed he might soon come in sight of the friendly lights of Torquay. The furious barking of a dog which rushed out as he passed the last homestead on the road was quite a welcome relief to the silence and monotony. He made no attempt to beat it off, but at length it turned tail, and once more he was left alone to his reflections. And yet not alone, since for some time past two dark forms had been dodging and following him from afar. He commenced to ascend the hill, which was enclosed on either side by a thick hedge, and half-way up to the right of

the road was a small but dense coppice. It was now quite dark. The last streaks of sunset had vanished, and no moon had yet risen to lighten up the gloom. Colley was now passing the coppice, when suddenly two tall masked forms darted out, and in an instant one seized the horse's head, while the other made a dash at the reins. Colley, thus taken by surprise, was no match for a well-equipped and powerful antagonist. A fearful struggle ensued, however. The masked man had already drawn a long knife, and inflicted several deep wounds on Colley. In vain Colley tried to wrench the knife away from his assailant, and at length, faint from loss of blood, he lay quite still at the bottom of the carriage, where he had fallen. Over him bent the mask! Up to this time not a word had passed between them. Colley was the first to break the silence.

"Villain!" he exclaimed, in a low, broken voice, "cowardly villain! what do you want? my money or my life?"

"Your life!" exclaimed the mask, at the same time throwing off the disguise.

In an instant Colley recognised the dark features of Guiseppe, the gipsy, and he knew that he could expect no mercy. Still, life was dear to him, and he would not relinquish it without an effort.

"My life, Guiseppe? What good will that do you? We cannot *now* undo the past! Let bygones be bygones. I will take care that you are well provided for. Besides," he continued, making a last appeal to the man's better nature, "you have taken me unawares and undefended. Gipsies even have their code of honour."

There was silence for a moment. Colley gazed earnestly up into the gipsy's face,

which showed signs of relenting. At this crisis, however, the second mask, who had all this time been looking on, a silent spectator, now stepped forward, and waving off Guiseppe with a sign of the hand, bent over Colley's nearly lifeless form, and gazed long and earnestly on his features; then slowly removing the mask, *Elvira* stood revealed. Can there be anything more solemnly awful, either in this world or the next, than to be brought face to face with the man or woman on whom we have inflicted an *irreparable injury*?

A cold shudder ran through Colley's whole frame at the sight of this woman's face. *Conscience* made him speechless and a coward.

"Traitor!" at length said Elvira. "Attempt not to parley with Guiseppe. Your days are numbered! We *have* our code of

honour, and by that code you merit *death*!" And drawing out from underneath the long cloak in which she was enveloped a small revolver, she deliberately fired on Colley, killing him instantaneously. Then, throwing up her arms over her head with a piercing cry, she pointed the revolver at herself, fired, and fell forward—a lifeless corpse. Guiseppe was taken too completely by surprise to intercept this sudden manœuvre on the part of Elvira. For some moments he remained stupefied by the side of the two bodies. Then, suddenly recollecting the moon would soon be up, and awakening to the danger of his position, he proceeded to unharness the horse. He cast one last look at the woman he had loved and risked so much for, and uttering a deep wail of rage and despair, that she had duped him after all, sped away across country, and, favoured by

the darkness, soon reached a secure hiding-place.

Early the next morning two reapers, going to their harvest, came across the ghastly remains of the tragedy of the night. The two peasants were at first too horror-stricken for either thought or action. At length they stooped down and examined the bodies to see if there might be any life left. Not a spark, however, was there.

"Dead as mutton!" exclaimed one honest boor.

"A love affair, I'll be bound," said the other.

"Poor fellow! And he looks a real gentleman, too! *However* could he have been such a fool as to get mixed up with this gipsy lass?"

"Well, she was a real beauty, anyhow," said the other; "so it was not 'stonishing if

he admired her, and then wouldn't be surprised if he didn't play her some shabby trick. It does not do to play the fool and raise the devil in these 'ere gipsies. They make short work of it when their 'monkey is up'!"

Upon which, having unburdened themselves of these wise remarks, the men at length began to collect their scattered senses, caught the horse, which fortunately had not strayed far, and sitting both astride on it, together set off post haste into Torquay to give the alarm.

Meanwhile Colley's friends became exceedingly anxious as the night wore on at his non-appearance, and their anxiety gave way to grave fears when they received a telegram from Mr. Enderby, saying Colley had started off by carriage for Torquay. They had not much longer to wait for the

confirmation of their fears. Early the next morning the alarm had been given, and soon the news of a murder and suicide spread through the town like wildfire. We draw a veil over the melancholy recognition by Colley's relatives of the long-lost heir. Suffice it to say, he was interred as quietly as possible, and the affair hushed up. In an unconsecrated portion of the same cemetery were deposited the mortal remains of the unfortunate Elvira.

Words would fail to describe the awful shock the Enderbys experienced. Marie received the news of Colley's sudden death with the strange calm of one who had been *forewarned.* It was only many years after she learnt all the cruel circumstances connected with the awful tragedy.

END OF PART I.

## Part II.

## CHAPTER XIV.

A FEW months later, and my tale shifts to Paris and the stirring events that are there being enacted; for this is for France *l'année terrible* from 1870–71, and the whole world stands aghast at the fate that has befallen Paris, "the beautiful," "queen among the cities of the world." The old year is fast drawing to a close, with all its tragic and awful reverses. The holy Christmastide, with its message of peace and goodwill to men, has passed amidst heart-rending scenes of death and woe, and in the fast approaching dawn of the New Year there seems little hope of

any alleviation of the misery, or a brightening of the horizon. Paris is in the grip of the Prussians, who circumvent it as with an impenetrable wall of iron. In vain have several successive *sorties* been made. Each attempt has been fraught with disaster and untold loss of valuable lives.

On one of the last days of December, towards five o'clock in the afternoon, a solitary man, with slow steps and downcast eyes, is crossing the Pont Neuf from the Louvre, and wending his way towards the Quartier Saint Germain. Barely five-and-twenty, above the usual height, of magnificent build and proportions, dark hair and brown eyes, with a high, noble forehead, from which the hair is brushed back, aquiline nose, and a large, but well-formed mouth, he was a person who in any place or circumstance would arrest your attention. He is

the personification of manly health and vigour ; one strong to dare and swift to do. His smile, however—one of his most remarkable characteristics—seems to light up his whole face with such an ineffable sweetness and tenderness that it charms and fascinates you in a remarkable degree. Every one feels its power, even to the smallest child, for it is the subtle power of *sympathy*, a gift as rare as it is beautiful. On this day, however, he looks a downcast and sorrowful man, as if crushed by the weight of a great grief. In his hand are a few little dainties he has managed to scrape together. As he reaches the end of the bridge, and pursues his way along the Quai des Augustins, and nears the Fontaine Saint Michel, bearing figures typical of Truth, Wisdom, Power, and Justice, what thoughts do they not suggest to a patriot and a lover of his

God and of his country? Truth? Wisdom? Power, and Justice? Ah! where are they *now*, forsooth? Religion is at its lowest ebb. The Commune will soon hold undivided sway, and all tenets be suppressed, but those of Louise Michel, who will lecture at her own sweet will, and fondly believe in the arrival of her millennium of the equality of all men. And though doomed to disappointment this once, who can say that in the *next great struggle* she and her cause will not reign omnipotent? As Louis de la Trémouille thinks on these things, no wonder his heart faints within him. Tears fall thick and fast, but he brushes them hurriedly away as he approaches the Boulevard Saint Germain, and turning a corner, finds himself opposite the house he is seeking. This is the aristocratic quarter, and here lived the Marquis de la Roche, of an

ancient family of Auvergne, only recently dead, the result of hunger, cold, and exposure in this never-to-be-forgotten fearful time. His only daughter, Aimée, who has been his companion and sharer of all his hardships, is now fast succumbing to the like fate, and in a few more hours will follow her father to his pauper's grave in the Cimetière Mont Parnasse, and with her Louis de la Trémouille will bury love and ambition. He and Aimée are first cousins, and some two years ago became affianced, when he was studying for the law, with every prospect of a brilliant career.

The young advocate had already attracted much notice, and he had been marked out by his fellow students for a rising man. Now, alas! all is changed, for in a few brief months war, famine, death and bankruptcy have dashed this cup so full of sweets from

his lips, exchanging it for one of gall and bitterness, to be drained to the very dregs.

As he steps across the threshold, and enters the *salle-à-manger* on the ground floor, an inner door suddenly and noiselessly opens, and old Annette (a faithful servant and friend) peers cautiously round the corner at the new-comer.

"Ah! Heaven be praised! It is *you*, Monsieur Louis!" she said, in a voice hardly above a whisper; for such was the tone adopted by all good citizens in these fast-approaching days of the Commune, when they were liable at any moment to be taken up as "suspects," and murdered in cold blood. Indeed, those who went through and survived these horrors have never got over the habit of speaking in a low, subdued tone, accompanied by a slight start; and they say they never will, so profound and awful

was the ceaseless terror in which they lived, moved, and had their being, in days when fathers fought against their sons, and women's hair turned white in a single night.

Annette, seeing all cause of fear for the present is over, steps softly into the room, and, going up to the young man, seizes both his hands in her lean, emaciated ones, and clasping them convulsively, again whispers hurriedly,—

"Ah! the Holy Virgin be praised! You are yet spared to us! I feared some evil had overtaken you, and you would never see your beloved Aimée in this world again."

"Say not so, Annette! See! I have managed to find these little scraps of antelope steak at the butcher's, which were sold to him this morning from the *Jardin des Plantes*—they will make good strengthening soup; and here is also a bottle of wine, which

will do our beloved Aimée a world of good, and infuse new life and vigour into her, until the next *sortie*, which we must hope and pray will be crowned with success, and we shall be delivered from this accursed siege."

The old woman looked at the dainties with sparkling eyes, but she shook her head dolefully at the young man's sanguine hopes of either the raising of the siege or of her young mistress's recovery. Indeed, so strange is the force of habit, she hardly desired the former, it having become part of her very existence to act as nurse; and during all this time, while so many around her had died of want and starvation, she had never failed to supply their small family of three with one meal a day. This was a triumph of the culinary art which caused her a satisfaction amounting to pride, which can be realized only by those capable of grasping

the situation of these unfortunates, in these the last days of the memorable siege of Paris, when a dish of rats was a luxury and a *bouillon* of old shoe leather an every-day occurrence.

And now the besiegers have decided on a general bombardment, and the dying moments of the young girl upstairs are ever and anon greatly disturbed by the distant noise of bursting shells. Suddenly comes a terrific explosion, and Annette and the young man hasten up to the room above, just in time to find the girl startled out of her death-like stupor by the force of the concussion. Lying on her bed, reduced almost to a skeleton by want and fever, her long black hair falling loosely over the pillow, and her once beautiful eyes nearly closed in death, is Aimée de la Roche, the idolised daughter of a noble house, and the pride and *fiancée* of

another equally noble. She tried to raise herself in her bed as De la Trémouille entered the room, and, for a moment, the poor face was lit up with the ghost of a smile ; but the exertion was too much, and uttering a faint cry, she fell back on the pillow, and, as De la Trémouille bent over her and kissed her repeatedly, she said in a low voice,—

"Ah! Louis, *mon bien aimé! Je meurs! Je meurs!* And to go all alone! And to leave you behind! Ah! it is too cruel! And, soon, you will forget me and love another! Ah! say, at least, you will never love another as you loved *me*!"

And she burst into a passion of tears that shook her poor feeble frame from head to foot, and in its violence seemed as if it must then and there sever soul from body. The dying scene had become weird and solemn

in the extreme, as the full moon streamed into the chamber of death, which had been stripped of nearly all its former adornments and comforts to supply the bare necessaries of life. No lamp or candle had been seen in the house for weeks past, and although there were a few smouldering ashes in the grate, which gave evidence of a fire, it was a luxury in the shape of a few small pieces of wood, which had been indulged in for the last couple of days at infinite pains and cost, as a last comfort to the dying hours of the invalid, who suffered bitterly from the cold, which, in these last days of December of the memorable year 1870, registered nearly twenty degrees of frost, as if the very elements had combined with man in aggravating the miseries of the siege. The fine old chestnut trees in the Tuilleries Gardens, hundreds of years old, had been ruthlessly

doomed to the axe, and what had once been a smiling paradise of Arcadian beauty had now become a barren waste ; and still there was a cry for *fuel*, which it was fast becoming impossible to supply, for, like food, it was *in extremis.*

Old Nannette, like numberless others, kept her bed nearly all day long for the sake of warmth alone, which it was impossible to get by any other means. As she stood cowering over the dying embers, in the pale rays of the moonlight, wild and haggard, some grey locks having escaped from under her cap, one lean arm stretched out over the still live embers, while with the other she occasionally crossed herself, uttering at the same time a pious ejaculation, she looked so ghost-like, and so unconscious had the other two become unaware of her presence, it was as if a visitant from another world had

stepped into the room to gaze on the woes of these two mortals, and witness the triumph of their arch enemy, Death. And meanwhile its dark presence was overshadowing them, and the girl had already shown signs of its near approach. After her passionate outburst of grief, and before De la Trémouille had time to answer her, she had again relapsed into a stupor more death-like than before. Yet once again she roused herself to consciousness, and as she opened her eyes, gazed long and fixedly at him. Power of speech was gone.

"Ah! my beloved Aimée!" he whispered, "there could no such love as ours be found again for me on this earth! You leave me desolate indeed, for, by the Holy Virgin, I will never wed another! I will take Orders, and the *Church* shall be my *bride*! Yes, by all the saints above, I *swear it*! and never

shall I cease to think of you, and pray for the repose of your soul!"

A terrific roar of cannon now shook the room, as if to ratify the solemn oath. The girl closed her eyes, and with one long, deep-drawn sigh her spirit forsook its earthly tenement.

We draw a veil over the young man's despair and the old woman's grief. Suffice it to say that they both lived to see the siege raised, the triumphal entry of the Prussians, and the reign of the Commune. Then, when order was once more restored under the Republican Government, De la Trémouille made a study for the Church, and obtaining a cure near his own family in the Auvergne, set out for his new destination, accompanied by the faithful Nannette, turning his back on Paris and the world for ever.

## CHAPTER XV.

"EN AVANT!" A crack of the whip, "*Sacré*," and another telling crack. Then another string of indescribable ejaculations, understood only by Jehu and his horses.

These were the unmusical sounds that greeted the tired occupants of a *diligence* that was plying its way from Claremont-Ferrand to the fashionable baths of La Bourboule. The interior was filled for the most part with wealthy Parisians on their way to the healing waters, all in the highest of spirits, and keeping up an endless chatter, to the great annoyance of two travellers in the *coupé*, who, quite tired

out with the heat and dust, endeavoured to court Morpheus. All in vain, however; the ceaseless noise of the other travellers, combined with that of the driver, effectually put a stop to any such thing; so, resigning themselves to their fate, our travellers of the *coupé*, an English lady and gentleman, retired each into their respective corners, and giving themselves up to their own reflections, inwardly prayed for a speedy termination of their long and dusty drive, and for a first glimpse of La Bourboule.

After several more tedious hours the desirable goal was at length reached, and as the *diligence* clattered into the stone courtyard of the Hôtel Mont Dore, our travellers proceeded to alight with all possible speed, the young lady in her hurry narrowly escaping a bad fall, in attempting to get out be-

fore the horses had quite stopped, which they refused to do without a final plunge, which nearly sent her head foremost on to the stone pavement below.

"Do take care, Marie!" said the shrill voice of the little Englishman; and we now recognise in the young lady our old friend Marie de Maistre, and introduce the reader to her uncle, Mr. Bute.

She laughed heartily at the latter's exclamation, and was about to reply, but he had already bustled out of hearing, and was exchanging warm greetings with the landlady of the Mont Dore, with whom he was a prime favourite, as indeed with whom was he not?

A remarkable character was Bute "Pacha," for so he had been dubbed by the Khedive, for meritorious service in Egypt. Clever, genial, a man of the world,

and occupying a high position in a foreign court, there were few people of any note, either men or women, from a potentate to a *primâ donna*, with whom he was not acquainted. At the same time, he never forgot his humble acquaintances, so that, to make a long story short, he was one of the most popular men on the face of the earth.

He was now in danger of talking himself into utter forgetfulness of poor tired Marie and dinner, so it was with a sense of relief Marie saw him at length reappear, and he walked her off to *table d'hôte*, where the guests were already assembled, and plying their knives and forks with an energy that augured well for the meal of which they were about to partake, and of which they felt sorely in need. They were bowed and scraped by *garçon* to their appointed places at a small extra table, where some

half-dozen persons were already seated. The place was crowded to overflowing, but *garçon* smilingly remarked that "To-morrow monsieur and mademoiselle would be put at the large table at the top of the room"; which meant clearly that, in the first place, *garçon* was duly impressed with the pacha's dignity, and secondly, that no *ordinary* mortal expected in one leap to reach that far-off paradise, which Eden this worthy guarded as jealously as the angel with the flaming sword. The pacha here acknowledged the honour to be conferred on him with a bow, which said as plainly as a bow could say, "I accept the apology and forgive the present omission," and at last proceeded to sit down and eat his dinner, to the intense satisfaction of the other occupants of the table, who were anxiously awaiting the end of the parley to commence

another course, which had been interrupted, poor hungry souls, and who felt in no way elated at the cause, even though it was the arrival of a real live pacha in their midst. A lull in the rattling of plates, knives and forks, and a corresponding increase in the clatter of tongues, betokened that the dinner was coming to an end.

Marie had now leisure to look about her and inspect her neighbours. The pacha was already plunged into conversation with a gay Parisienne whom he had met before in some European capital, and they were discussing old times, and renewing the friendship with a warmth and energy that left nothing to be desired.

Utterly wearied out with her long journey, Marie was about to retire from the table, when the lady seated next her remarked with a pleasant smile,—

"How amusing it is at *table d'hôte!* Quite a study in character, to say nothing of dress. How do you like that young lady's red gown opposite?"

Marie looked in the direction indicated, and then replied with her usual impetuosity, the *tout ensemble* not pleasing her fastidious taste,—

"Oh, I think it is hideous! abominably ugly!"

"What an exaggeration!"

The lady smiled, as she added quietly, "Still it is stylish; but everything in this world leans towards exaggeration. It is the fault of the day. Is it not so, Monsieur l'Abbé?" she continued, addressing a young priest who was seated just opposite her, and whom Marie had observed during the dinner with some curiosity.

There was something so taking about this

lady's voice that Marie's attention was now completely arrested, and she awaited the young priest's reply with interest. That he should be there at all was somewhat surprising; but she was a quick discerner of character, and recognised in a moment that he was far above the ordinary run of French Roman Catholic priests, who are oftener than not recruited from the lowest ranks of the people. Here was an aristocrat from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, with all the grace and manner of an accomplished man of the world, and as he turned to answer Madame Marçeau, for such was the lady's name, Marie was struck with the beauty of his countenance, and its ineffably sweet expression.

"I agree with madame," he answered; "and unhappily exaggeration, or, in other words, conventional lies, are the curse of this

nineteenth century. Everything is strained —from the monarch on his throne to his poorest subject—each and all alike endeavouring to keep up appearances, and struggling to maintain positions well-nigh untenable and intolerable."

Here Bute Pacha joined in the conversation, which now became general, and every one was struck with the young priest's eloquence and brilliant powers of conversation, none more so than Marie, who wondered whether she would see anything more of this interesting son of the Church. She was not left long in doubt, for on retiring to the *salon*, he joined Madame Marçeau, and soon engaged her in an animated conversation.

Meanwhile Marie had almost hidden herself in a deep recess of the high old-fashioned window, from whence she was

looking absently out into the courtyard in a sort of brown study, a habit which had grown on her very much of late. She was thinner and graver than of yore, but this in no way detracted from her good looks ; on the contrary, it lent a dignity and calm to her features which greatly enhanced her commanding beauty. However, her family not feeling quite satisfied at the state of her health, they had willingly accepted the offer of her uncle Mr. Bute to escort her to La Bourboule, whither he also was bound, he being in the habit of taking the waters there every year ; so it came about, that she and the jolly pacha had set off in company for a trip to *La belle France.*

"You seem very tired, mademoiselle," said the cheery voice of Madame Marçeau, as she came up to where she was sitting ; "you ought to retire early, and take a good rest,

for if you take the baths you will have to be up very early in the morning."

"Yes," she replied, "I mean to take your advice;" and rising, she wished her friendly neighbour of the *table d'hôte* good-night, at the same time thanking her for her kind solicitude.

"Well! I think you must thank the Abbé de la Trémouille as much as myself, for he it was who asked me to come and speak to you, and pay you attentions; he thought, as you are the only English lady here, you would find it lonely;" and she added, with a smile, "Monsieur, your uncle, seems very much occupied."

And truly at this moment he had eyes and ears for no one else but the charming countess upon whom he had stumbled at the dinner-table, and who still monopolised him over coffee.

"Pray, who is the Abbé de la Trémouille?"

"The priest who was seated opposite us at dinner, and who is now over there taking his coffee; he is a most delightful person. He has a cure not far from here, and has come to La Bourboule to drink the waters. We arrived here about the same time, a week ago, and are now very friendly. I like him as a son. He is extremely clever, and makes a charming companion. He desired me to say, he hopes you will join us in some of our excursions, if you are fond of exercise."

"Not anything I should like better," replied Marie; "to-morrow we can arrange something;" saying which she shook hands with her pleasant acquaintance, bid her uncle good-night, and bowed to the priest *en passant.*

## CHAPTER XVI.

NEXT morning Marie awoke betimes, but not too early for the business she had to go through before *dejeûner*. Barely had she time to array herself in the marvellous *costume de bain* which is *de rigeur* in these parts (and in which, by the way, you are so thoroughly metamorphosed your nearest and dearest fail to recognise you), when a couple of bearers with a covered sedan chair appeared on the threshold, and requested her to put herself in, and then set off at a run down the stairs, and into the streets, at a pace which caused poor Marie no little alarm, to whom the proceeding was novel in the

extreme. She was only reassured by meeting other victims being conveyed similarly as herself; and observing that they were stoically indifferent, resigned herself to her fate, and was at length deposited with a violent bang on the stone floor of the bath-house. She was now let out of this ingenious trap, to soak in a warm mineral bath for upwards of an hour, when the bearers again reappeared with the formidable trap, the return journey being accomplished in the same manner with the chance of an extra excitement, in being conveyed to the wrong hotel—a not uncommon occurrence. Marie, however, was again deposited in safety in her room, there to cool slowly, and reflect on her first adventures at a fashionable French watering-place.

At breakfast-time her uncle was curious to know how she had fared in her morning's

experience, and anxious to plan some amusement for the rest of the day. Madame Marçeau here came up to claim Marie's promise to join her in a walk to one of the many beautiful waterfalls in the neighbourhood, to which she agreed, and they were soon wending their way through the noisy courtyard of the hotel, which at this hour was converted into a perfect pandemonium, with the noise and bustle of innumerable men and boys offering riding ponies and horses and carriages to the highest bidders.

It was a glorious summer's day, and one of which all the visitors seemed determined to make the most. Numberless were the bright excursion parties they met at nearly every step, some in carriages, some riding, and others on foot, like themselves, and all in the highest of spirits, as who could fail

being so, in the fine bracing air of this most beautiful mountain region, when the mere fact of breathing it was a blessing and joy in itself, and soul and body seemed to expand and rejoice in the goodness and beauty of creation?

Thus far they had not been joined by the priest, but they now distinguished him in the distance, climbing up towards them, by a steeper and shorter path than that which they had taken. He was gathering flowers and ferns by the way, for he was a clever botanist, and delighted in collecting specimens.

"The Abbé de la Trémouille seems a very clever, interesting person," remarked Marie, "and so genial and sociable, it seems difficult to believe he could *voluntarily* have renounced all social pleasures. Can he be expiating some crime? He does not look like a criminal, does he?"

"No," replied Madame Marçeau; "it is more likely to have been some love affair! Every one is very much struck with him; he makes quite a sensation at the hotel. He is so handsome, such a man of the world, and so brilliantly accomplished, that no one thinks that anything but a cross in love would have driven him into the Church; in fact, he said himself at dinner the other day, when he passed a very positive opinion on some subject under discussion, that he *ought* to know, for he had been in the law, and had not *yet* forgotten all about it. So the Church, at any rate, was an after thought."

"The Church is to be congratulated on the acquisition, at any rate," said Marie.

Here the abbé joined them, which put an end to the discussion. He apologised for his tardy arrival, at the same time presenting his bouquet of wild flowers to

Madame Marçeau, and proceeded to unpack a small parcel of chocolate, which he handed to Marie, and begged of her to accept and distribute. He then produced a small silver flask containing wine, which he poured into a dainty little silver cup, and handed to the ladies. There was such a natural grace and dignity in all he did that his company was a real pleasure, and Marie wondered still more what could have been the story and sorrow that had brought about this penance, and lost to society so much grace and talent.

Lunch over, they pursued their walk, and great was the priest's astonishment at Marie's agility in climbing and lightness of foot, as she flew over the rough ground and stony water-courses, always refusing his proffered aid, though he kept near her, watchful, and at hand. As Madame Mar-

çeau looked admiringly at the handsome man and woman walking ahead of her, her inward reflection amounted to this — good Roman Catholic though she was—what a handsome couple they would have made ; a thousand pities he should have buried himself in the Church.

Meanwhile Marie was fast forgetting any shyness she might have at first felt with regard to the young priest. The conversation never flagged, and though *both* seemed carefully to avoid all religious topics, Marie's sympathies seemed drawn towards him to a remarkable degree.

"I hope you admire our mountain scenery, mademoiselle?" he said, as they were nearing home, and the walk nearly at an end.

"Oh yes," she replied eagerly, "it has been thoroughly enjoyable, and though you may be shocked to hear me say so, it is a

long time since I have felt so religious; the mountain air and scenery seem to have inspired me with new faith and hope; for I am sorry to say that lately both have been at a very low ebb indeed. There was bitterness in my heart, and a certain satisfaction in knowing that it dwelt in the hearts of others. Old grievances, past and present, came over me; and, to give you an instance, I felt positively happy when I met the Comte de P—— this morning, strolling in the gardens, and reflected that here was the representative of an ancient monarchy that had persecuted my Huguenot forefathers to the death, now himself an exile in a foreign land, and—strange irony of fate!—the people that ought to uphold both himself and his religion, preaching a crusade against *both!* Grimly declaring, "*A bas le roi!*" "*L'ennemi c'est le prêtre!*"

The priest smiled sadly at the girl's frank confession, then, after a pause, answered kindly,—

"You have suffered, mademoiselle; but you are naturally kindly and sympathetic, and, to such as you, 'Heaviness may endure for a night; joy comes in the morning.' Open your heart in sympathy to your fellow-creatures, and your soul to the beauties of nature. In them you will find your solace and your reward." And taking both her hands in his, he said gently, "We are friends, are we not?"

She murmured a faint "Yes," too much overcome to reply. She felt he had touched the lost chord, and broken down her stronghold of pride and reserve, through the mighty power of a great sympathy.

## CHAPTER XVII.

FROM the day that the priest had broken through Marie's coldness and reserve, and led her to speak so frankly and openly of her innermost thoughts, there had come over her a peace and calm she had never before known, and a courage to endure which never more forsook her; and she appeared almost radiantly happy.

Walks and drives with her uncle, in which the priest usually accompanied them, occupied most of Marie's time, and the days followed one another in quick succession, and the time was drawing all too near when they must one and all bid farewell to La Bourboule.

One evening Madame Marçeau asked Marie if she would not give them a little music. She readily assented, and seating herself at the piano, commenced with a brilliant march. She had great natural talent, had studied well, and been well taught. As she turned off into one of Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words," she simply enchanted her audience, who listened spell-bound as she played another and yet another of the charming melodies, with a taste and feeling which left nothing to be desired. She finished with one of Schuman's "Slumber Songs," and as the last tender notes died slowly away, she had almost forgotten her audience, who now greeted her with warm applause.

"I never heard you play so well before!" said her uncle; and thereupon every one in the room made some complimentary re-

mark. The priest alone maintained a studied silence—he who was always the first to kindly encourage her, and she wondered the more at his strange silence.

The party now broke up, expressing once more to Marie the great pleasure her playing had given them all. The priest was the last to wish her good-night, as he said slowly, and as if with an effort,—

"Mademoiselle, I thank you from my heart for your beautiful music; you can never know the pleasure it has given me!"

Then, for the first time, she noticed how deeply he was moved.

He made her a low bow, and walked quickly away. Of late there had been awakened in him many tender thoughts and feelings which he had thought buried for ever in the past. In face and style Marie de Maistre reminded him forcibly of

his lost love, Aimée de la Roche. Her Norman blood inclined her to the French type both in features and in vivacity of manner; her conversation pleased him, and, essentially, they differed but little in opinion. To-night her playing had completely overpowered him. Passionately fond of music, and himself a good musician, he had been brought soul to soul with her through its subtle harmony, awakening visions of bygone love and happiness. He had left the hotel, almost unconsciously, and was pacing up and down with rapid strides the now dark, silent and deserted park. And yet he must try and blot out all these tender awakened memories! Much less give way to any tempting delusions in the future! For there had come the thought that it was possible to lay aside the papal yoke, and enter a less binding Church. But how

could he possibly forget his promise to the dying girl? No! the step he had taken was irrevocable.

The very next morning he would leave La Bourboule, and devote himself more strictly to his duties, and resign himself once more to his solitary life. But who could fathom the bitterness of the resolve? Or who dissect the thoughts of his heart, as at length, quite wearied out with his inward wrestlings, he flung himself down on a seat, and, with a long and loud sob, buried his face in his hands? The first light streaks of dawn at length aroused him from what he afterwards fancied must have been one long swoon. He rose hastily from the bench on which he had flung himself during the night, and directed his now faltering steps towards the hotel. Having reached his room, he made a hasty toilet,

and seizing pen and paper, addressed a few lines to Madame Marçeau, excusing his somewhat abrupt departure, and penned Marie the following note : —

" Chère Mademoiselle,—It is with many regrets that I leave La Bourboule, and shall always look back upon those hours which I have spent in your company as among the happiest in my solitary life. And yet it is not solitary ; for I have that never-failing companionship—a good library of well stocked and instructive books. Numerous duties in my church and parish take up the rest of my time, and keep me fully occupied, and to them I hope to return with renewed strength and energy. Wishing you every prosperity, and with kind remembrances to your uncle,

" Yours humbly,

" Louis de la Trémouille."

It was not without a pang of regret that Marie read the above farewell missive.

So their delightful friendship had ceased to exist! It must be buried among the things of the past! Well, this was only what she had foreseen could possibly be the end of their acquaintance! And there was not anything in the cold formal note to give her any hopes of ever renewing it. It was just as she was bound to expect it would be. And, after all, it was as well that he should have already left. What good could have possibly come from a further intimacy? No! it would have been only playing with fire! It was a good thing that he was gone. And so she endeavoured to reason with herself, and forget the blank in her life that his departure had left.

Her visit was also drawing to a close, and a few days later she was to bid farewell

to La Bourboule. Her health was greatly restored, and she also had her duties to fulfil, on taking up her appointed place in the world's joys and sorrows. But she felt her sympathies enlarged, and a greater toleration for those who differed from her in creed ; for there had come over her of late the firm conviction that, however widely we walk apart from one another in outward forms and ceremonies, our peace of mind here, and our final good, can be attained only through love and sympathy with our fellow-creatures, as we journey along the narrow path of duty and self-sacrifice.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE had been much talk among the guests in the Hotel Mont Dore with regard to the new railway from Clermont to La Bourboule. Various were the opinions on its merits and demerits. Some who had come up from Clermont by rail were loud and enthusiastic over the beauty of the scenery, and the triumphs of engineering. Others who had come by carriage declared the line was much too new to be safe, and that there had already been one or two serious accidents, so that no one with a grain of prudence should think of venturing yet awhile.

"Well, Marie," said Mr. Bute, "what do

*you* vote for? Shall we return to Clermont by carriage, as we came up, or by the new line?"

"Oh, let us try the railway, by all means!" exclaimed Marie, who was always of an enterprising spirit, and who, in the various discussions on the subject, had sided with the railway, as she ever did with any new scheme deserving support and encouragement.

"Well, then, pack up your boxes," said Mr. Bute, "and we shall start off early to-morrow morning;" and he bustled off to make his own preparations, and bid farewell to his numerous acquaintances, who were loud in their regrets at the departure of the courtly Mr. Bute and his charming niece.

"Ah, mademoiselle," said Madame Marçeau, as she took leave of her young friend that evening over their usual after-dinner

cup of coffee, "we have had a most delightful time in these charming mountains, surrounded by pleasant friends. We shall neither of us ever forget our pleasant visit here, nor the Abbé de la Trémouille, and we cannot fail to be both of us the better for having made his acquaintance. In a few weeks I shall be returning to Mexico, but you may come here another season, and perhaps may meet him once more, for which I shall envy you. The world is very small, after all, and the over-ruling ways of Providence bring strange things to pass. In the meanwhile I wish you a very prosperous return journey; your train leaves too early in the morning to admit of my seeing you off. You must take the will for the deed, my dear young friend, and excuse an old lady's early rising;" saying which she embraced Marie most warmly, once more ex-

pressing regret at her departure, and another break up to their pleasant party. And this was no mere formal leave-taking, for Madame Marçeau was really much interested in the young girl, whom she greatly liked and admired.

Then came a formal hand-shaking with the other guests, and at length all adieux were over, and Marie was at liberty to retire and prepare for her long journey to Paris on the morrow. And that morrow dawned with all the splendour which only those who have lived in mountain scenery can fully realize, as peak after peak catches the first golden rays, until all seem ablaze with light, awakening as it were the very rocks into life. Such was the impressive sight that greeted Marie, as she rose early on this the last morning of her mountain sojourn in the fashionable watering-place of La Bourboule, as she

opened wide the window to let in the cool bracing mountain air, and gazed out on the splendid panorama for the last time.

Not the smallest speck of a cloud dimmed the brilliant horizon, and the most superstitious could have augured nothing but good for the undertaking of a journey. Yet, before this sun which had risen in such undimmed glory had set in the heavens, on what countless scenes of misery would it not have looked down! What endless struggles! What agonizing forms of disease and death! So argued Marie, as people even at this early hour were already astir, hastening to the baths, and devout priests, with open book and downcast eyes, commenced pacing the shady avenues of the park opposite, in meditation struggling bravely against the world, the flesh, and the devil. At this point of her reverie Marie

was startled by a violent knocking at the door by the *garçon*, who loudly assured mademoiselle that she had only half an hour to dress, swallow her breakfast, and reach the station to catch the express to Clermont, and that he was waiting for her boxes. Marie hastily collected her wandering thoughts, and dressing herself with all speed, soon joined her uncle at a hasty breakfast, and after warm leave-taking of host and hostess, hurried off on their way to the station.

As they passed through the courtyard of the hotel there was the same animated scene. Excited owners of ponies and donkeys eagerly letting them out on hire for the day to the highest bidders, and equally excited guests declaring the prices demanded to be an imposture, and ending in acceding to all extravagant demands, and allowing them-

selves to be fleeced with an alacrity wonderful to behold, thereby confirming the impression among these simple mountaineers that all travellers (John Bull in particular) command an unlimited supply of gold pieces, much after the fashion of the hen with the golden eggs. They lingered a few moments to watch the amusing scene, and then hurried on to the station, just in time to take their tickets and catch the express as it came dashing into the station, shrieking like some monster from the infernal regions. A few moments of delay, then with renewed shrieking of the whistle, the steam giant with one rush was whirling them along, through tunnels, over bridges, torrents and embankments, at the frantic speed of fifty miles an hour. But what, reasoned Marie, if this engine with its living freight behind should become ungovernable? Absurd thought.

Why should she be possessed of such extravagant notions? They were fantastic, to say the least of it.

Then she roused herself to look about her and admire the truly marvellous scenery of volcanic mountains, rising in the Puy de Saucy to the height of 6,190 English feet above the level of the sea, the most elevated point of Central France.

"Nothing," said Mr. Bute, "can be more exact than the resemblance of these extinct volcanoes to those now in activity in other countries! Their presence in Auvergne shows that volcanic action may suddenly commence in any part of the earth's surface, where no such action had been previously apparent, and after having ejected various igneous products, altering the whole physical character of a country, it may cease for at least long periods of time, and a district

once laid bare by volcanic eruption again become a smiling garden."

Marie, who had been greatly interested in Mr. Bute's scientific discourse, now looked out of window. The train was nearing a steep and much-talked-of incline, at the bottom of which lies the station of the picturesque village of Saint Roque, and which she knew to be the cure of the Abbé de la Trémouille. He had spoken to her about this incline, telling her to be sure and observe it well if she returned by rail. And then, was there not also a lingering hope that he might just happen to be at the station? It was so difficult to believe that they had really parted, to meet no more in this world. And now they were descending the incline; but how was it that no brake was applied, no slackening of speed?

Faster, and yet faster flew the train. *Oh! horror!* it became apparent that the train was propelled by its own weight, and notwithstanding brake, and every effort and contrivance on the part of the driver, it was totally ungovernable. This also passed through Mr. Bute's mind like a flash of lightning—and in another flash of time the train had reached the end of the incline, rushed through the station, to the horror of the bystanders, and dashed headlong into a heavy goods train, which had no time to get out of the way of the runaway express. To Marie it was an awful crash, a heavy blow, then darkness and oblivion. Mr. Bute was thrown violently to the opposite side of the compartment, while the next carriage telescoped with theirs, breaking his leg, and jamming him up in the woodwork, and completely burying them both under the wreck.

To onlookers it was indeed a fearful sight, as every carriage telescoped the one into the other, and still more fearful were the sounds, as there arose on the air the shrieks, the oaths, and in some few cases the prayers for mercy, from the wounded and the dying.

Every possible aid was soon at hand to succour the unfortunate people. The church bell tolled to warn far and near, and soon the task of rescue commenced in earnest. But none were so indefatigable in the mournful task as the parish priest. Pickaxe in hand, he helped on the work of rescue, liberating those who had any life left in them, and administering words of comfort to the dying. At length he came upon the wreck under which Marie and her uncle lay buried. A moan of pain soon set the priest at work to dislodge the wretched victim. The pickaxe was plied with renewed energy,

and in another five minutes Mr. Bute was unearthed with a broken leg.

"Heaven have mercy on me! Help me out of this misery!" cried the poor man in a fainting state.

The priest poured some brandy down his throat, and looking up, Mr. Bute recognised the Abbé de la Trémouille. "Heaven be praised you are saved, monsieur!" but he added hurriedly, and in a voice of agony, "Oh! where is your niece?"

"I know not! I have neither seen nor heard her since the collision! For God's sake dig under this *débris*! We must find her, alive or dead!"

The priest needed no pressing, and set to work with all his remaining strength, while Mr. Bute, rendered quite helpless, looked despairingly on. For a good quarter of an hour all search was vain. At length

the axe laid bare a huge beam, and under this lay the apparently lifeless body of Marie."

"Oh! *mon Dieu*!" groaned the priest, "she cannot be *dead*!"

He lifted her in his arms, and carrying her like a child through the crowd, and out of the station, turned in the direction of his modest dwelling, where he handed her over to the care of the faithful Nannette. And with their combined efforts they succeeded in restoring her to consciousness. No! Marie was not dead. The huge beam under which she had lain had prevented the heavy mass of wreckage falling on her, and killing her outright; but she had received a severe internal injury, and though restored to consciousness for a few moments, soon became delirious from her injuries, so that she never recognised her preserver.

The priest hurried back to look after Mr. Bute, who was placed on a stretcher, and also conveyed to the priest's dwelling. And at length the wounded had been all rescued, and conveyed to the various houses in the village, whose inmates hospitably opened their doors to receive them, while the dead were placed in long rows in the little station; and fearful it was to look upon the mutilated, and in many cases quite unrecognisable remains, of what, an hour before, had been living men and women, in the full enjoyment of health. So thought the priest, as at length, his mournful task over, he walked sadly away from the awful scene.

That Marie and her uncle had been preserved was indeed miraculous. But then, had he not prayed for them day and night? and was not this the natural result of his supplications? Yes, certainly! For in

matters of faith this, in reality clever, erudite man of the world, was simple and trusting as a child; for through the waters of tribulation he had learned that the "wisdom of man is foolishness with God," and that unless we are converted and make ourselves as little children, we shall "in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

## CHAPTER XIX.

FOR weeks Marie lay on a bed of sickness, hovering between life and death. She had received a severe internal injury. For days at a time she was delirious, going over the past, with its many eventful episodes. Now she was holding an imaginary conversation with her cousin Bob, laughing loudly at his queer sallies and remarks. Then came a short pause. And now she was in earnest conversation with her two lovers, Captain Pierrepoint and Mr. Colley, feebly remonstrating with the former when he upbraided her, and crying as if her heart would break

in going over the parting with Charlie Colley, whom she knew she would never meet again.

Then came quieter moments. Her strength was fast failing her. Only youth and a good constitution could survive the strain, said the doctor. The crisis was at hand. She became quieter. Once more she was walking and talking with the priest at La Bourboule. Peace and calm were stealing over her.

"Yes!" she murmured, "we are friends, are we not?"

At this moment, the priest (who with old Nannette kept unceasing watch over her) now stepped forward, and bending down over her, whispered gently,—

"Yes! friends, evermore friends."

A smile came over the pale, wan face; she heaved a gentle sigh, and in another

moment she had sunk into a calm and deep sleep.

The crisis was over. She was saved.

"Thank God!" said the priest, as he sank down into a chair, and, overcome by anxiety and long watchings, wept like a child for very joy.

Meanwhile Marie slept on with the profound sleep of exhaustion. Old Nannette busied herself preparing all sorts of dainties for the time when the invalid should be well enough to partake of them; for her woman's heart had gone out in sympathy to the young English girl, who had so narrowly escaped so awful a death. Also, she saw in her a strange likeness to her lost Aimée, and it almost seemed to the old woman that she was once more going through the eventful days of the siege of Paris.

For twenty-four hours Marie slept without

moving a muscle. It was a glorious autumn morning when she at last opened her eyes. The sun was streaming into the little room, with its simple, unpretending furniture, for there was no carpet or curtains to spoil a well polished floor, and white dimity hangings, an old oak wardrobe, a few chairs, and a small table by her bedside, on which was placed a large vase of wild flowers—such was the interior. All this Marie took in at her first glance; but *where* was she? And who was that strangely weird but kindly looking old woman standing beside her, and offering her something in a spoon, endeavouring to make her swallow it? She could not tell; and already tired with merely endeavouring to *think*, she closed her eyes again, enjoying only the feeling of restful calm and satisfaction of a well-cared-for invalid, recovering after weeks of utter

prostration. This state of things continued for several days longer; then, as Marie became stronger, her mind gradually concentrated itself.

Yes! here she was, her very self, Marie de Maistre. But was she at home, or *where*? At this moment the door opened gently, and—could she believe her senses? —in walked the Abbé de la Trémouille! What could it mean? Was she dreaming? At present she had no recollection of what had befallen her.

"Thank God, you are now out of danger," said the priest, taking her hand; "you have been very ill indeed, and yet too weak to attempt any talking; but rest assured you are well cared for in my house, and do not trouble about anything," he added kindly, and quietly left the room.

She knew not then how tenderly he had

watched by her night and day, taking his turn with old Nannette, nor could she have guessed, from his calm demeanour, of the unspeakable joy her recovery had given him. Yes! she was in his house, but *how* did she get there? Suddenly the recollection of her uncle and the railway journey came over her, then the awful crash of the collision, and uttering a loud cry, she burst into tears. The priest and old Nannette were soon at her side, alarmed by her scream.

"Oh! *where* is my poor uncle?" she exclaimed.

"He is safe and sound, dear mademoiselle," said the priest, taking her hand and endeavouring to calm her. "As soon as he was well enough to travel, he was compelled to return to England, and left you under our care. I had a letter from

him to-day, saying that your aunt, Miss Mercer, had already started to join you here, and Nannette and myself will do our best to make her heartily welcome."

"It is very kind of you," said Marie, somewhat comforted, and she could not help smiling at the bare idea of Miss Mercer (of all people in the world) coming to take up her quarters in a Roman Catholic priest's house.

Great, indeed, had been the consternation at the Manor House when the pacha had turned up without Marie, and his story of the latter left behind in France, too ill to be moved. Miss Mercer was at first beyond all pacification simply. After *this*, the deluge! All this came of girls gadding about! In *her* youth they stayed quietly at home, and no one ever heard of such outlandish adventure.s

"Well, Aunt Mercer," said Mr. and Mrs. de Maistre and the pacha in chorus, when the old lady had quite exhausted herself scolding, "will you or will you not oblige us by going over to look after Marie? Some one must, that is certain!"

At first Miss Mercer set her face like a flint to the proposal, but at length better counsel prevailed, and at last she was made ready to start on the eventful journey, to perform two good deeds—to nurse her niece and, as she fully promised herself, to combat antichrist.

It was a long and tedious journey, and right glad was the old lady to find herself at Clermont-Ferrand, where, according to promise, she found the Abbé de la Trémouille awaiting her arrival at the station to take her up to the mountains. From what we know of the priest, it was not

astonishing that Miss Mercer was soon favourably impressed by him, and when at length, the long drive over (the railway had been carefully avoided), they reached St. Roque, Miss Mercer jumped out of the carriage with an unusual sense of exhilaration, induced by the bracing mountain air and a somewhat uneasy, not to say sore feeling at heart, that she *might* have, after all, greatly misjudged the Roman Catholic priesthood; for are we ever quite so black as we are painted? Then came another mollification on finding Marie so well nursed and out of danger. Still Miss Mercer was not one to relinquish her deeply rooted convictions for any passing emotional feeling of gratitude; so it was still with decidedly combative feelings that, all greetings with Marie over, they sat down to a plain but substantial meal in the one sitting-room of

the little house, which, for the first time, witnessed the domestic innovation of the two ladies.

A cheerful fire was burning on the hearth, and soon Miss Mercer, *nolens volens*, was in a first-rate humour with her host. The two ladies did most of the talking, however, for Marie had countless questions to ask of her aunt.

"Where is cousin Bob?"

"Oh! he is still in India, safe and sound out of the way of Charité Trémouille!"

"*Trémouille!*" said the priest, starting up; "why, that is my name! We must be relations!"

"So it is!" exclaimed both ladies.

"How odd," said Marie, "that it has never struck me before!"

"Well," said the priest, "I know we had some Huguenot relations who fled from

France at the Revocation ; my family have often spoken about it, and would now like to find them out. I know many of the Huguenots found a refuge in the Channel Islands."

"Then indeed you must come," said Miss Mercer; and this set them all talking as to when and how they were to take Marie home.

The doctor had said the journey must be broken in Paris, and thither, to the astonishment of Miss Mercer, the priest offered to accompany them. The proposal did not take Marie by surprise, however. During the days of her convalescence, and when she was able to take walking exercise, the priest had, of course, been her companion, and she perceived that a great change had come over his religious convictions. He complained bitterly of the wickedness and atheism of the people.

"In another generation," he said, "they will not know the name of God. France will soon be sunk into heathenism."

"See what comes of having kept the Bible from them!" said Marie,—"their spiritual food."

This raised a long argument; on the priest's part, that the Church was founded on the Apostles, not on the Bible, and for the matter of that, the people were allowed to read the Douay version of the Scriptures.

"Yes! but it is not a correct version, and you do not teach them to study it, and make it their daily food."

And so Marie stuck to her point, exposing the Romish errors. This, at first, was not palatable to her opponent, but still it left an impression.

About this time too came the news of the secession from the papacy of the eloquent

Père Hyacinthe, one of the noted preachers of the Madeleine. In the priest's present frame of mind this astounding fact could not otherwise than influence him and cause him to reflect.

"Yes! he would accompany Marie and her aunt to Paris, and see and hear for himself this remarkable man."

## CHAPTER XX.

SO it came to pass, a few weeks later, the priest set out for Paris to escort the ladies. To Marie there was much to amuse and admire in this gay capital, but to the priest, who was revisiting it just ten years after the siege, and who had gone through its many painful incidents, there was much food for sober reflection.

The streets were thronged as of yore ; still a perceptible change was there. The former show and tinsel of the Imperial *régime* had vanished. The giddy, laughter-loving capital wore a decidedly subdued look, and a walk through the principal thoroughfares showed the Tuilleries and many other public build-

ings still in ashes—a mournful memento of the frenzied deeds of the past. No! Paris had not even *yet* recovered from its sweeping judgment. And besides all this, there was the festering wound of unbelief undermining the nation, and causing it to reel in the throes of Atheism. This the priest had realized from bitter experience from his long intercourse with the people during the last ten years as a physician of souls. And now, what could remedy the evil? Ah! what indeed, when a nation forsakes God and gives itself up to work wickedness?

Then the thought of Père Hyacinthe came over him. He would go the very next Sunday and hear him. Accordingly, when the day came round he made his way to the Catholic Gallican Church in the Rue d'Arras. A short walk took him to his destination. He entered a large-sized

chapel of the plainest description, resembling a Lutheran church. The service commenced, the officiating priest celebrating mass in the vulgar tongue. Of course, to one accustomed to all the elaborate forms and ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church, which appeal so strongly to the senses, the service, stripped of all ornaments, vestments, incense, lights, etc., was not at first likely to produce on the Abbé de la Trémouille a very profound impression.

But at last Père Hyacinthe mounted the pulpit, and in a clear, sonorous voice gave out his text from Isaiah iv. 6 : "And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain."

From that moment to the close of the sermon De la Trémouille's attention was riveted.

Père Hyacinthe's eloquence was like a river, widening and increasing in strength as it flows along, carrying all before it in its mighty effort to reach the ocean of futurity.

He grasped his subject with a master mind. The dogma of infallibility was thoroughly dissected and cast to the winds as incompatible with the human intelligence. Last, but not least, the forced celibacy of the priest was condemned. So long as it was voluntary, well and good, not otherwise. Besides, in restoring to the priesthood the sacred ties of the family hearth, it would deliver it from the bondage of a foreign power, reconciling it at the same time with human nature in general, and with patriotism in particular. Then, as the eloquent preacher went on to reason of righteousness, temperance and of the judgment to come, he carried conviction with him.

The sermon had lasted over an hour, but to his listeners it seemed but a quarter of the time.

The congregation rose to go, but still De la Trémouille sat on, lost in a profound abstraction. It was only when the beadle touched him, and smilingly informed him that the service was over, that he mechanically got up and left the church. He was possessed of an indescribable emotion as he threaded his way through the crowded streets back to the hotel. But this time there were no violent wrestlings, no parting of soul and body, as it were ; his mind was made up. Conviction had not come with violent upheavals, but through the still, small voice of conscience. The *table d'hôte* proved a sore trial to his patience. Miss Mercer was in a very garrulous frame of mind. Where had Monsieur l'Abbé been to

church? What did he think of Père Hyacinthe? Was he the remarkable man he was made out to be? etc., etc. To all these questions De la Trémouille answered as briefly as possible, mentally wishing the old lady a long way off.

Miss Mercer at last gave up in despair all hopes of what she had anticipated would be an enlightened argument on the burning topic of the hour, and Marie, seeing how pre-occupied he was, prudently maintained a discreet silence.

Dinner at length over, the two ladies were about to retire. Then for the first time De la Trémouille seemed to awake up to what was passing around him, and stepping forward he said to Marie,—

"Mademoiselle, will you allow me to accompany you out walking?"

"Yes! certainly," she said, smiling at his

unusual gravity; and he continued, "If you do not object, I will choose our walk; I have much to say to you."

"Oh! decidedly," said Marie; "you shall be my guide."

So once again he traversed the well-known streets, and marked the well-known spots, so bound up with memories of the past. He paused on the Bridge Saint Michael, to point out to Marie Notre Dame and the elegant spires of the Sainte Chapelle. Then, seized with an irresistible impulse, he laid bare to her his past history, and the story of his disappointed love. The revelation did not take Marie altogether by surprise, as she had always believed that something of the sort must have driven him into the Church, and she was now well content to have those suspicions verified. De la Trémouille then made a rapid sketch

of his life as priest among the people of Auvergne. He told her how the general atheism and wickedness had appalled him, his meeting with herself at La Bourboule. He then dwelt on her first awakening in him the real cause of the general profligacy, contempt of the priesthood and things holy, it having plunged the people in superstition and Mariolatry, through the suppression of the Scriptures, and now had set in the inevitable reaction—loathing and hatred of those who had shut out from them the light. He went on to say how Marie had almost persuaded him. His inward struggling for the mastery against truths of which his conscience secretly approved, his sudden departure from La Bourboule, the railway accident which had again thrown Marie across his path, and finally his now complete conversion to the reformed Catholic Church

through the eloquent and convincing persuasion of Père Hyacinthe's discourse that morning were all recounted.

"Curiosity impelled me to go and hear him, conviction now constrains me to adopt his tenets, and rally to his side."

"Ah!" at length exclaimed Marie, "that was the reason of your pre-occupation during dinner. I felt sure something very unusual must have occurred to make you so pre-occupied."

"Yes! And now I have something equally serious to ask you. Will you be my wife and helper in the new life which I am about to enter? I know I ask you to sacrifice a great deal; still you are of an earnest disposition; for," he added with a smile, "we have had sufficient intercourse to know we have much in common. Is it not so?"

Although De la Trémouille's proposal took

Marie completely by surprise, there was no coquetry in her nature, as, after a brief pause, she looked up earnestly into his face as he gazed fondly and inquiringly into hers. She felt this was no trifler, or trifling affair. And so, after a brief pause, her answer came.

"You really feel assured that you have read me rightly? For my part, I have long ago looked upon you as one of the noblest and best of men. There will be no sacrifice where there are mutual love and confidence."

Thus the matter was settled very satisfactorily between them. But how would it fare with their respective families?

Nothing could exceed poor Miss Mercer's dismay when Marie broke the news to her that evening. To use Miss Mercer's own expression when speaking of it afterwards to her relations and friends,—

"You could have knocked me down with a feather."

Vainly the old lady endeavoured to reason and argue Marie out of it. Prayers, tears and entreaties, however, were in vain. Marie was the most obdurate of all obdurate lovers. Not only would she marry Louis de la Trémouille, but they would be married in a fortnight, if they had only bread and water to live on. Hereupon Miss Mercer nearly went into hysterics. However was she (Miss Mercer) to inform her parents of what had happened? Marie was taking most mean advantage of her, etc., etc.

The next morning she would pack up her things and return to Guernsey, and Marie might marry as soon as she liked; and so they parted for the time being in high dudgeon. Next morning, however, brought calmer council to Miss Mercer. She wrote

to Marie's parents for advice, and wisely determined to remain where she was and look after her *protégée*. After a while came Mr. de Maistre's answer :—

"DEAR MARIE,—I hear your mind is made up to wed your late kind protector. I will throw no obstacle in the way of what I am assured is a real love match, and that you may have something besides bread and water, I will give you a liberal allowance, and then wash my hands of all responsibility.

"Your affectionate Father."

"Short and sweet!" said the delighted lovers, who lost no time in making preparations for a speedy marriage. It was to be of the simplest description, and Père Hyacinthe was to tie the knot. Miss Mercer was the only witness. So it came to pass, on one of the last days of spring, the little community

of the Gallican Church was thrown into a great ferment of excitement at the then unwonted occurrence of the marriage of one of its priests. In high circles also the much-talked-of event caused no little stir and curiosity. So much so that many persons of rank found themselves in the church to witness the ceremony.

The bridegroom was pronounced highly interesting-looking, and when the bride appeared, leaning on the arm of Miss Mercer, there was a distinct murmur of approval and admiration. The plain black silk gown, with a plain white tulle veil thrown over the head, though severe in simplicity, were singularly becoming to her classic and intellectual style of beauty. Many wondered who she could be, and not a few remarked it was a pity she was thus throwing herself away.

The simple ceremony was soon over.

They were husband and wife, united by law, but still more so by the true bond of real affection and sympathy; in their united strength prepared to fight the good fight, in the new sphere of usefulness marked out for them. Neither ever wished to return to the world of fashion in which they had once shone. Both had tasted of its dead sea fruit. Both had longed for the tempting apple, and with both it had crumbled to ashes at the first touch. Thus, through crosses and disappointments, they had realized that only through the entire surrender of self, in the opening of the heart to a universal love and sympathy of the brotherhood, could they hope to attain to something like that happiness on earth which has ever been the dream of poets and philosophers alike.

# PART III.

## CHAPTER XXI.

IT is a beautiful midsummer's day, just five years since we last heard of Charité Trémouille. The old house in Fountain Street shows signs of the greatest activity, both inside and out. The whole place seemed given up to the broom and soap and water. To make a long story short, it is one of the annual house cleanings proverbial to Guernsey. There, no well-regulated household ever omits this yearly turn out. The thermometer might stand at zero. No matter! The general shake-up must come off, from basement to attic, and I defy you to find such a thing as a solitary

spider or cobweb in any chink or cranny of a dwelling that has been thus renovated, after the Saint Jean.

Over all this stir and bustle Charité presided like the genius of the place. She is not much changed since last we heard of her, though five years have passed over her head. All this time she has not received one of Bob's long-looked-for letters.

At first she gave way to many sighs and tears, but as time wore on the disappointment wore off. At nineteen one is not past all consolation. And now, if she did not receive the ironmonger's attentions with *empressement*, she at any rate no longer discouraged him. So matters stood on this bright midsummer's day, to the great satisfaction of old Trémouille : so much so that even the discomfort of the turn-out failed to ruffle his temper, as he sat complacently outside his

door, smoking his "churchwarden"; and he loudly expressed his admiration of his little daughter's activity, as, dust brush in hand, she flitted about the old house, a bright scarlet handkerchief thrown over her well-poised head, and dress tucked up over a striped petticoat, showing beneath a sensible amount of black stockings and well turned ankles. It is true there were many distractions. The rolling of carriages on the pavement below sent her flying with curiosity to the window. Sometimes it was a wagonette full of excursionists, just started from one of the principal hotels on a well-arranged drive around the island. Some young man of the party would catch sight of the pretty picture at the window, smile, and kiss his hand, whereupon she would instantly dart back again into the room, too shy to run the gauntlet of such marked notice and admi-

ration. Sometimes it was an old-fashioned landau, with primitive customers from the country, to purchase some of old Trémouille's *gâche* (currant cake) to grace a holiday festival board. Then Charité would look smilingly down on them and enjoy a little gossip, then hurry back to work with renewed energy, to make up for lost time.

There was only one corner into which the broom had not yet entered, and that was an old lumber room at the top of the house, the general repository of broken chairs and cracked china of a bygone, though by no means inartistic generation, and into this sanctum Charité penetrated, determined to inspect and give it a thorough overhauling. But what most arrested her attention was the imposing appearance of a massive leather trunk, studded all over with large brass nails, tracing out in the centre the initials "De la

T." There was such a look of solid strength and dignity about it that even her childish and frivolous mind felt awed. Where could it have come from? To whom could it have belonged? She had never known her father travel so far as Sark even. *He* could not have been in want of it. Here was a mystery! What could it contain? What secret of the past lay buried there? What skeleton would confront her?

At length, overcome with a fever of curiosity, and longing to dive into the depths of the old trunk, she seized the key, which was hanging on a nail in a corner close by. It was rusty with age, but bore signs of having lately been oiled, and an attempt made to clean it. She applied it eagerly to the lock. At first her trembling fingers could not turn it; but after many unsuccessful attempts, and putting all her strength into one violent effort,

she was at last rewarded with the welcome click, as the lock flew back. It was a moment of intense excitement. Slowly she raised the lid, and peeped cautiously inside. A pile of receipted bills first saw the light. These were hastily flung aside on the floor. Next came a wonderful gown of ruby velvet, with waist on a level with the arm-pits, and high stand-up collar, and then a delicious embroidered white satin petticoat, to be worn under the ruby velvet. Here was treasure trove indeed. This marvellous costume was handled with due reverence, and carefully put on one side. That very night she would try and get into that slender waist. It was as wonderful as the trunk itself.

Once more she applied herself to rummaging. A few more antique gowns of less imposing appearance revealed themselves, and

as she examined and shook out the last, down fell a parcel tied with a piece of ribbon. It was a bundle of letters. The excitement over the gowns was so absorbing, the letters would in all likelihood have followed the bills, without any further investigation, had not her own name caught her eye. What was this? In another moment the string was torn off, and at least a dozen letters addressed to herself, and signed, "Your ever faithful Bob Le Gros" lay scattered on the floor. With a loud cry of astonishment and delight, she stooped down and gathered up the precious epistles; then sitting on a broken chair, she commenced to read:—

"BOMBAY.

"MY DARLING CHARITÉ,—

"Here I am safe and sound in this land of heat and niggers. The latter are the most trying specimens of the human animal

under the sun. I feel inclined to whack them all day long, but it would take too much energy. How often I long to be back again in my own little island, true Guernsey-man that I am! I hope you keep your spirits up, and, above all, that you never flirt. I shall expect an answer soon, with all news about yourself and the current gossip. I am on my way up country, so in great haste.

"Always your faithful,

BOB LE GROS.

Yes, there they all were, upwards of a dozen letters breathing undying love and devotion. And she herself? How had she requited this? Ah! how indeed? Had she not soon lost patience at not hearing from him, and was she not on the very eve of a marriage with the rich ironmonger? She had been talked into it, no doubt, but that

did not lessen her guilt in her own eyes, now Bob's letters lay there before her.

Carefully and tenderly she packed them up as before, but *this time* slipped them safely into the depths of her pocket, to be perused again at leisure moments. She was about to leave the room, but an irresistible feeling impelled her to get to the bottom of the old trunk. Not even the surprise and delight of finding her letters could make her forget that she had not ransacked it to the uttermost. Accordingly, once more she gazed longingly into it, and her busy fingers were soon at work overhauling its contents. Many and various antique objects came to light. More ancient gowns, which, frail daughter of Eve, she promised herself should be altered, and made to suit her own slim figure. These stiff satin gowns would be the acme of perfection, and the envy of all

her acquaintances. So she gave herself up to a dreamland of delight, as one after the other revealed itself to her admiring gaze. But they came to an end, like other good things; only a very faded and yellow piece of parchment remained to be examined. *Was* it worth the trouble? For one moment she hesitated, but on second thoughts decided to bestow on it some attention. In her present mood it required no little patience to decipher the musty, dusty parchment, for so faded was the writing in many places it was scarcely legible. 1685 was the first date, and the document commenced to set forth the stirring adventures of one De la Trémouille of noble birth, who, persecuted for his Huguenot opinions, fled from France at the Revocation. Then came a long account of his adventures in a fishing smack, after making his way to the coast. How he was

tossed and buffeted about for many days on the wide ocean in his frail bark, when it was at last driven ashore on the island of Guernsey, where he landed, divested of family and fortune, without a farthing in the world. Here he was only too glad to get himself apprenticed to a baker, for bare existence sake. The document further stated that the family was an ancient one of Auvergne, who had followed their lords to the Holy Land, and fought against Turks and heretics.

The writer and refugee then went on to say, he had come into favour with his employer, who had given him his daughter in marriage. Many years later came an entry in another hand, stating the above had been gathered to his fathers, and then followed entries by the descendants, down to a late period, when the aristocratic "De"

had been dismissed, and Trémouille was all that remained. I say *all.* But was it not enough for fame? For generations, the recipe for the famous *gâche* (currant cake) had been handed down from father to son, and from time immemorial the celebrated shop had been the pride of Guernsey. And Charité? This was indeed a day of revelations to her. With regard to the letters it never entered into her simple mind that there had been a conspiracy against her, and as to the document, this only was clear, that she could hold up her head as high as any of the proud damsels who congregated about the High Street on market days, and that she would marry Bob, and he need never be ashamed of her.

She was aroused from these joyous reflections by loud cries of "Charité, Charité, child, where are you? Are you never coming to supper?"

With one bound she was at the door, and in another moment she was at the bottom of a steep flight of stairs and in her father's arms, breathless with excitement, the precious document in her hand.

"Look, father, what I have found in the old trunk!" she exclaimed as soon as she could speak. "Our family pedigree. Have you ever seen it before?"

The old man took it in his hand with an amused smile, and pretended to examine it with great interest. In reality he cared as much about it as the man in the moon; moonshine, in fact, he thought it. Suddenly he exclaimed,—

"Then you must have found a parcel of letters too." This was a much more important fact.

"Yes, and letters from Bob also. He promised me he would write. I thought he

could not have done so, for all this time past I have received no letters from him, and there, in the old trunk, I found them all to-day."

"Worse luck to it!" said the old man grimly; "I wish I had put them in the fire."

"You, father?" exclaimed the girl. "Did *you* put them in the trunk?"

"That I did! I thought he had no business to write to such as you, seeing he could never hope to marry you, in my opinion, and in the opinion of his family, who thought no good could come of the engagement, so I promised Miss Mercer to keep back his letters from you, in kindness to you both."

"Oh, father! And now, you see, we are somebody after all, and Bob's family need not be ashamed of us. At any rate, I will *not* marry the ironmonger, and will write this very evening and tell him so."

"For what purpose?"

"To marry Bob, of course."

"Then, silly child, you have never heard what has happened?"

"Happened?" said Charité, looking up at him with wondering eyes.

"Yes, what happened more than a year ago. He married his cousin, Ida Le Messurier, out in India."

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE P. & O. steamer *Cathay* from Bombay was well on its homeward voyage. It had just left Gibraltar, the last port of call. All the passengers were congregated on deck, to look their last at the Rock, and admire its picturesque grandeur. Many and various were the passengers. The maimed, the sick, the halt; time-expired warriors, home-sick subalterns, grass widows and widowers, the two latter mingling freely on board ship, and consoling each other for their mutual loss. Then there were widows and widowers in reality, the last-named fighting much more shy of one another. And for obvious reasons. There

were no impedimenta : set the ball of flirtation in motion, and away it would go. It would never roll gently on board ship, but on the contrary, increasing its speed as it neared the brink of matrimony, would plunge at a bound into the dark impenetrable future. There is no receding from a flirtation on board ship. Everything is against it. There may be a coolness, even a quarrel, but as you are bound to meet one another every day as regularly as clock-work, and bound in the interests of the community to make yourself agreeable, and amuse your neighbours, it stands to reason that eventually you become faster friends than ever after a tiff. Absence —that important factor on shore—is on board ship an unknown quantity. All chance is removed for the time being, it is a dead certainty.

So the old campaigners were very wary,

and amused themselves watching the moves of their younger and less cautious neighbours, speculating on the results with all the relish of an idle life on board steamer.

One only among them seemed utterly oblivious of all that was going on around him. He was a tall, handsome man dressed in deep mourning. At the present moment he was reclining in a deck chair, newspaper in hand, the perusal of which was his usual occupation, from which he scarcely ever looked up, except when a bright-eyed girl of four years old, his only child, gambolled around him. Then he would rouse himself from his paper, or from his day-dreams, as the case might be, and jumping up, would play with and amuse her, until tired out, or fetched away by her ayah. She was a beautiful and spoiled child, adored by her father, and utterly ruined by her ayah, who, truth

to say, stood very much in awe of her imperious little mistress, who had just summarily dismissed her, as she had put herself under her father's care; and then only was the nurse's vigilance relaxed. Unusual occurrence, however, the father's attention was suddenly diverted from her. He had become deeply interested in a conversation going on between two fellow-passengers sitting near him, and which he could not help overhearing. They were old acquaintances, both from the Channel Islands, and meeting after some years' absence, naturally they had much to communicate. The last theatrical triumphs of the Jersey Lily were chronicled with all the gusto of an enthusiastic Jerseyman, who believes not anything in the wide world can equal his own emerald isle; while the Guernseyman dilated on his own island *belles* with all the ardour of a good patriot.

"Well! it *was* an excitement when your *belle* Miss de Maistre married the Catholic priest. I thought she was on the cards for A1," said the Jerseyman.

"I recollect dancing with her years ago at a military ball in Guernsey. By Jove! she *was* a good dancer!"

"Yes! I certainly thought she would have taken a prize."

"So did I," said the Guernseyman; "but neither of these cousins married brilliantly. However, love won the day, and they are happy; so there is nothing better to be desired," said the staunch Guernseyman.

"And how about Captain Le Gros?" pursued the other speaker, "for you know he was engaged to Miss Trémouille, the baker's pretty daughter, and it appears that he jilted her, and she has died of a broken heart."

The listener turned deadly pale. His hands clutched convulsively, and jumping up from his chair, with one stride he was by the side of the talkers, at the same time seizing the arm of the astonished Jerseyman in a mighty grip.

"Sir! I beg to state that you now see before you Captain Le Gros, and I inform you that it is impossible that the lady in question could have died in consequence of any neglect on my part, for reasons I am prepared to state; and I insist on your retracting what you have just announced as a fact."

"Sir!" replied the irate Jerseyman, who had by this time shaken himself free, "'listeners never hear any good of themselves,' in the first place, and secondly, I feel quite at liberty to repeat what is currently reported, and believed to be truth."

Their voices had grown loud. Passengers promenading the deck looked anxiously in the direction of the noise, fearing a *fracas*, while sea-sick and invalid ladies got up nervously from their deck chairs, and vanished as quickly as they could from the scene. There is no telling how much further the matter would have gone, but at this crisis every one was startled by a heart-rending shriek. A moment after came a shout from the watch of "Man overboard!" In an instant all was bustle and confusion. Every one rushed to the side of the vessel in the greatest consternation. Foremost among them was Captain Le Gros, as, without a moment's hesitation or inquiry, he jumped overboard to the rescue. To rescue whom? His own child! For so it was. She had been more than usually restless that day. Seeing her father's attention

diverted from her, she had slipped away from him unnoticed. In another moment she had climbed a low bench at the side of the ship, and then working herself up, stood triumphantly on the ledge. But a sudden lurch of the vessel upset her balance; her foot slipped, she let go her hold, and in an instant she fell, and the pitiless waves closed over their prey. Captain Le Gros struck bravely out, but there was a heavy swell on, which retarded his progress. Suddenly, a couple of yards before him rose his little daughter. The shock was so awful it completely paralysed him. He stretched out his arms with one desperate effort to seize her, but strength failed him, and for the third time she sank, to rise no more alive. A fearful cry of despair escaped the wretched father. He was fainting from shock and exhaustion. But succour was at

hand. The ship's boat had come up. He was lifted out of the water, and in another five minutes was brought back to the steamer.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

IT was a damp, misty evening towards the end of autumn. There was none of that "golden haze," that "tender remembrance of the days of spring," which poets love to write about. It was a raw, penetrating fog, inducing those uncomfortable shivers right through the body, vulgarly attributed to some one walking over your future grave, but which all sober-minded people believe to be the precursor of a violent chill. This was the practical view taken of the matter by a traveller undergoing the unpleasant experience of the weather, who had just landed on the Guernsey pier from a South-Eastern

steamer. He hurriedly collected his baggage, and ordered a porter to place it on a truck and follow him, as he would walk.

"For Gardner's Hotel, sir?" inquired the man.

"No; for the old Manor House of Fontaine!"

"The old Manor House!" said the astonished porter. "Beg your pardon, sir, but it is a long way out. Would you not rather take a cab?"

"No, I prefer a walk to warm me."

"Here's a rum un," thought the man; "and what a strange time for the people of the Manor House to be expecting a guest. Who *could* he be?" He longed to have a friendly gossip with the stranger, as he thought him, but unfortunately the traveller appeared in no humour for that sort of thing, and strode on ahead, leaving

porter and baggage to follow more leisurely. The traveller could not help feeling a sensation of pain and loneliness. Here he was again in his native isle, after many years' absence, with every sight familiar, even to this man's face. Yet the latter in no way recognised him. It was the same with others he encountered on his homeward walk. None gave him any sign of recognition. Had he been talkative, he might have learnt many facts with which he was quite unacquainted, but he was ill and depressed, and only hugged his loneliness the closer.

It was with a strange thrill of awe he passed the Trémouille old house in Fountain Street. It was uninhabited, with large bills posted in the windows, announcing it "To be sold or let." Old Trémouille must have followed his daughter to another world.

Great tears welled up, and rolled down his cheeks, as he thought of the old familiar times gone by for ever. And how would he find them all at the old Manor House? He now felt half inclined to turn round and question the man; however, he again changed his mind, merely quickening his pace. His proud, sensitive nature recoiled from the idea of his family affairs being thus retailed. So he trudged on.

Meanwhile all was silence and gloom in the old Manor House. The chill autumn wind was moaning and whistling around the corners of the house and in the old chimneys, while the sea kept up an ever melancholy refrain. All the blinds were drawn close, and only in one room, the library, were there any signs of life. Here a large fire was burning, and several persons were gathered round it. They were all dressed in deep

mourning ; surmounting the bookshelves was the latest acquisition to the room—the urn containing the ashes of the late Lord of the Manor, which only a few days before had been brought back from Woking, where the body had been cremated. For such had been the wish of the old man, and th terribly awful process had been gone through with in due course. But such an unusual occurrence could not fail to produce a great sensation, and as to the simple country folk, they were thoroughly scandalised. After a wedding nothing excites such interest among them as a fine funeral ; and that they should have been done out of an imposing ceremony, with all its trappings of woe and crape, was an unpardonable offence. To be burnt like a heathen! Not to be buried comfortably with his forefathers in the family vault. What desecration! What witchcraft! His

soul would never rest. Already there were strange and weird tales in circulation of how the old lord was to be seen walking up and down the library containing his ashes wringing his hands with every sign of distress and woe. Of course every one was too superstitious to go in the dead of night and ascertain the truth of the report for himself; so all accepted as a fact what they had not the moral courage to investigate. Even the Manor House party were not exempt from a certain uncanny feeling as they sat there around the flickering fire, the cinerary urn reflected in the old-fashioned mirror over the fireplace above them.

The party consisted of Mrs. de Maistre, Marie and her husband, Hélène and her husband, and Miss Mercer, and, as companion to Mrs. de Maistre, Charité Trémouille. She had not died, as was reported. Her illness

was a long and severe one, and though much shattered in health, her youth bore her through it. Old Trémouille was much cut up at his daughter's prolonged illness, the more so as after the great shock he had given her with regard to Bob's letters, and his subsequent marriage, she no longer evinced the same affectionate and trustful feeling towards him as heretofore. This deeply pained the old man, who really loved his daughter to distraction.

One day, in despair at Charité's indifference to him, he wrote a miserable letter to Miss Mercer, asking her to come and see Charité, explain matters, and take her share of blame in the matter. To this she assented, now seized with remorse at the trouble she had been instrumental in bringing into the Trémouilles' home.

Accordingly, once again she went down

the Fountain Street, knocked at the old house, and asked to see Charité. Great was the shock to the old lady to see the ravages wrought by grief and sickness in this hitherto blooming damsel. All Miss Mercer's pride was disarmed at the spectacle. She had come to confess, and would make a clean breast of it, and ask the girl's forgiveness. So there, in the silence of the sick room, Miss Mercer whispered to her silent and astonished listener how she had persuaded her father to intercept all letters from Bob. How, at the end of a year, Ida le Messurier had gone out to India to join him, and he had at last consented to marry her, according to the family arrangement. How it had turned out a very unhappy union, Ida leading a life of gaiety and pleasure, from which not even the birth of a little daughter could tear her away. Miss Mercer felt as if

a load had been taken from off her when she had finished her confessions, and from that day Charité commenced to mend.

This visit of Miss Mercer's was the beginning of a great friendship between them. The old lady (barring family pride and insular prejudice) was of a really kind and helpful nature, and quite enjoyed bustling after and attending to the sick girl. Then was she not in all probability a direct descendant of Marie's husband's family? and it must be owned that this thought was extremely gratifying, and silenced her scruples in the matter of her attentions. Then, after a while, when old Mr. Trémouille and Mr. de Maistre sickened and died, Miss Mercer had Charité installed at the Manor House as companion to Mrs. de Maistre. Thus it was she formed part of the family group assembled this eventful evening in the library of the Manor

House. No living member of the family was absent but Bob, and naturally their thoughts and conversation reverted continually to him.

"It is very strange we have had no news of Bob for so long," said his sister. "Poor fellow! I hope he is not ill!"

"No news is always good news," said Miss Mercer; "but, on the other hand, if he were too ill to write, we should have to trust to that flighty wife of his, and goodness only knows whether she would take the trouble to write," sighed the old lady.

"It is very strange!" they all exclaimed.

"And," said Marie de la Trémouille, "if he started on leave, as he intended when last he wrote, he would be due now, and though he does not know of dear papa's death, he would be in time for the reading of the will, at which he really ought to be present."

At this moment Roger, the fox terrier,

who had been asleep on the hearthrug, jumped up, and with ears and tail erect, commenced to growl ominously. His keen sense of hearing distinguished a noise; or was it footsteps? All listened intently. Soon a distant crunching on the gravel walk announced approaching footsteps, and Roger's growls developed into frantic barks. But what was their astonishment when, instead of hearing the orthodox ring of the bell, the hall door was gently opened and shut, footsteps lingered a few moments in the hall, then rapidly approaching the library, the door opened, and a man's figure stood on the threshold! Meanwhile Roger, who had been barking furiously the whole of the time, made ready to spring, with bristling ears and tail erect, and as soon as the handle of the door turned, with one bound confronted the intruder. But how was this? Instead of

a desperate onslaught, as they all anxiously expected, Roger gave a sort of whine, and with his tail between his legs shrunk back to the hearthrug. Astonished at this unlooked-for behaviour on Roger's part, they all looked with increasing curiosity at the new arrival; then, like the dog, they evinced unmistakable signs of astonishment, not to say fear; for there, gazing calmly at them, was *surely* the old lord in the flesh. Slowly the tall bent figure, thin face, and grey hair moved towards them in the flickering light of the fire, while they shrank back as if spell-bound.

Suddenly a loud cry of astonishment and joy broke from Charité Trémouille; she rushed across the room, and exclaiming, "It is Bob!" threw her arms around his neck. Then he, in his turn, gazed wistfully and inquiringly at the girl he held in his arms.

*This* was no visitant from the spirit world, but Charité Trémouille in the flesh. Then, for the first time, his grave face relaxed into the old cheery smile, and they doubted no longer that here indeed was their long-lost Bob.

The greetings on all sides became boisterous, and as to the questionings and the explaining away of their mutual misunderstandings, words fail to describe it. The excitement at length somewhat subsided. Bob related how, just as he was on the point of starting home, his wife had taken a fever contracted through exposing herself to chill when overheated from dancing, and notwithstanding everything that could be done for her, had succumbed to her malady; how he had taken passage to England on board the *Cathay* with his little daughter, and of the shocking fatality that had befallen her; how

he had had brain fever during the remainder of the voyage to England, where, on arrival, he had been placed in hospital, too ill to write or give any directions for informing his friends of his whereabouts.

He rose from his sick bed to find himself an utterly shattered and broken down man, his altered and aged appearance giving him a striking resemblance to the late old Lord of the Manor. He could not make up his mind to return home, but wandered about from place to place, until, seeing the death of his uncle in the papers, he at last summoned up his courage to bend his steps homewards. Next day, in solemn family conclave, came the reading of the will, before that important functionary, that impenetrable sphinx, the family lawyer. Not a muscle of his face betrayed him, though he had every clause by heart.

The Manor House was to pass over Marie into the possession of her cousin Bob, he taking the family name ; Marie receiving in lieu a good lump sum of money.

Many weeks had not elapsed before a double marriage took place in the family circle. It seemed a matter of course that Bob de Maistre and Charité Trémouille should be joined together in matrimony, but great was the astonishment of the gossips (including the lady herself) when it was announced that old Mr. Laney and Miss Mercer intended to become one and indivisible. Whether from a sudden fit of gallantry, or a sharper twinge of the gout than usual, it is none of our business to inquire, the old gentleman offered his hand and heart to our astonished old maid. Once more the glorious vista of gardens and hot-houses opened up to her delighted gaze. Even

"the storm" was not good enough for the supreme moment of her life. A light lavender silk was offered up upon the altar of her maiden days, from which she had never hoped to emerge, which was doubtless destined to be as famous to the rising generation as "the storm" had been in the family chronicles of the past.

And here we take leave of the actors in this homely drama, begging you to remember, dear reader, that "the best in this kind are but shadows, and the worse are no worse, if imagination mend them."

THE END.

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